

## **Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy: What to Expect**

### **What is the pelvic floor?**

The muscles inside the pelvis that support the bottom of the pelvis are called the pelvic floor muscles. They help support our organs and relate to the functions of our bowel, bladder, and sexual function.

### **Who might consider a pelvic floor muscle assessment by a physiotherapist?**

The pelvic floor muscles can be involved in any condition related to the bowel, bladder, sexual health, organ support, or pain in and near the pelvis. Some examples of conditions we often treat include pregnancy, post partum, erectile dysfunction, pain with intercourse, incontinence or urine or feces, testicular pain, tailbone pain, recovery from pelvic / abdominal surgery and pelvic organ prolapse.

### **What should I expect at a pelvic floor physiotherapy initial assessment?**

We book 60 min for each new pelvic floor assessment. Your physiotherapist will sit with you and talk about your history. They will likely ask questions about your medical history, as well as your bladder and bowel habits, sexual health, and any discomfort that you may have. Your goals will be discussed.

The physiotherapist may look at your posture, low back, pelvis and hip movement.

Your physiotherapist will explain the anatomy of the pelvic floor muscles and how they may relate to your situation.

You will be asked for your consent for an internal examination in order to assess the muscles of the pelvic floor.

Your abdominal function may also be assessed.

After your assessment, your condition will be explained and you will discuss your treatment plan going forward. You will be given recommendations on what you can do to improve your condition.

### **What is an internal assessment?**

The best way to assess the function of the pelvic floor muscles is for your physiotherapist to feel them internally. This is done via the vagina or the anus, or both. No instruments are used in this exam. The physiotherapist will ask for your permission and talk with you about each part of the process. You can participate in any part that you are comfortable with, and ask questions or stop whenever you want or need to.

An internal assessment will allow the physiotherapist to examine the quality of muscle contraction and strength, endurance, relaxation, and any specific areas of tension. Different muscles can be assessed by feeling them manually. Your pelvic floor physiotherapist can then educate you on the best method for contracting, relaxing or stretching the specific muscles in order to help with your specific condition.

### **What if I am not comfortable with an internal assessment on the first visit?**

Although doing an internal assessment is the best way to gain the most information, and treat the muscles, it is not required. An external assessment of the muscles is possible, although limited, and for some people this is a more comfortable starting place. Some people want to meet their therapist and talk about their situation and learn about the anatomy of the muscles and their condition without doing any physical assessment on the first visit.

**Do you treat all genders?**

Yes. We are open to helping any gender and supportive of all genders.

**What do you recommend for pelvic floor physiotherapy during and after pregnancy?**

We recommend a pelvic floor physiotherapy assessment as soon as you know that you are pregnant, and then creating a treatment plan from there. We also recommend a visit for all pregnant patients at 35 weeks gestation, in order to help prepare the pelvic floor muscles for birth. In addition, we recommend an assessment for every mother at 6 weeks post-partum in order to discuss pelvic floor and abdominal recovery and discuss goals and safe return to activity.

**Are there any contraindications to having a pelvic floor (internal) assessment?**

We do not recommend an internal assessment if you have an active infection, such as a current flare up of a urinary tract infection.

**I have pelvic pain and I am not sure I could tolerate a pelvic exam. What should I do?**

You should definitely come to pelvic floor physiotherapy! This is a condition that we can treat. We will discuss your specific situation with you and create a comfortable place to start, on your terms.

**What if I am menstruating?**

We can still do everything we need to do if you are menstruating, including an internal exam.

**Can I bring a child with me to my visit?**

Yes. We want you to do whatever you need to access good care for your health. We commonly have children present and will do our best to accommodate all situations. If this works for you, then this works for us. If you feel that you will not be able to focus and learn during your session, then other childcare options may be better for you. It's your choice.

**Thank you. We look forward to helping you achieve your goals.**