



# Pelvic Health

at PhysiYoga

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# Women's Health Physio

## About this resource

If you're reading this, you probably have questions about your pelvis and reproductive health. This e-book is designed to introduce you to Women's Health physio to determine if this might be the next right step in optimising your health and wellbeing.

## Why have a women's health assessment?

There is high level evidence that physiotherapy can help reduce symptoms of pelvic floor issues, including incontinence.

Many conditions may appear the same, but have different causes. Such as incontinence - there are many causes and contributing factors. Without a thorough assessment carried out by a trained professional, it is difficult to obtain a correct diagnosis and therefore formulate an effective treatment strategy.

## When should I do it?

It is likely that ignoring issues will mean that you continue to have problems that can worsen over time. Sooner is best as prevention is far better than cure.

For example, leaking when you cough, sneeze, laugh or run is certainly not uncommon - but it is not ideal and can be a sign of weaknesses that can lead to pelvic organ prolapse requiring surgery to correct.

# Pelvic Health

Pelvic Health Physiotherapy involves diagnosis, assessment and treatment of issues relating to the Pelvis. This includes pain anywhere in or around the pelvis, incontinence, constipation, pre and post-natal care, painful sex or prolapse.



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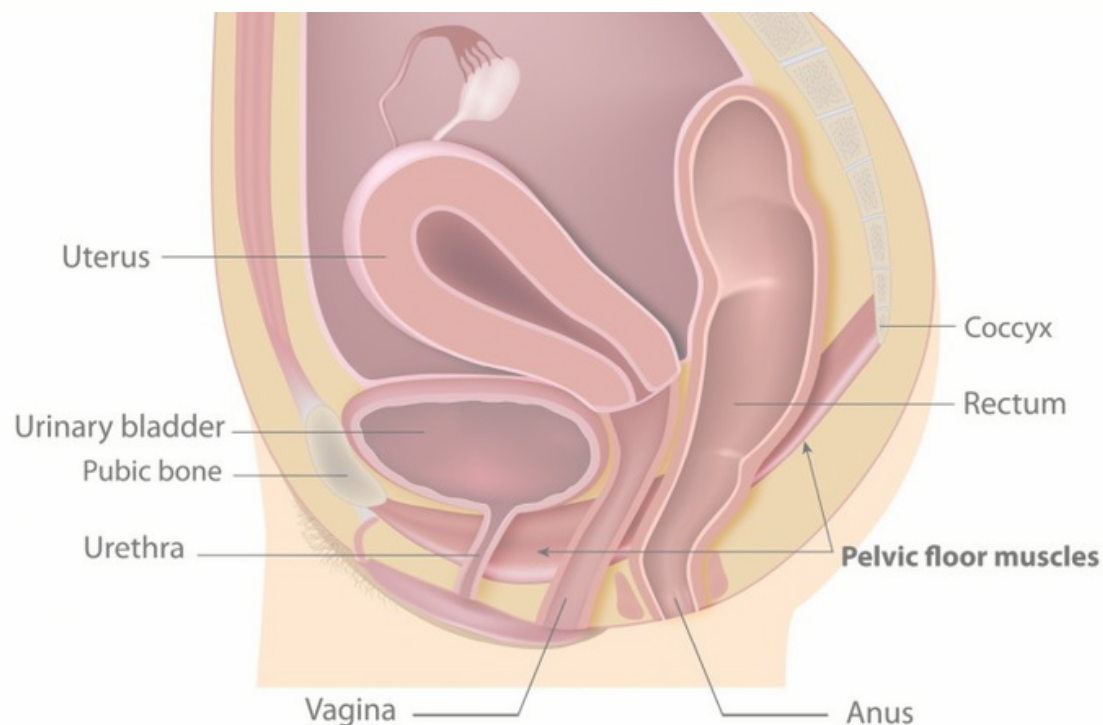
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# Women's Health

Pelvic Health has traditionally been referred to as “women’s health”. This branch of physiotherapy is directed toward women’s issues, as women experience the unique challenges related to childbearing and childbirth. Women’s Health Physiotherapy is a specialized area of physiotherapy where your physiotherapist is trained to assess and treat common Women’s Health issues through the life stages.

There is increasing awareness of the range of pelvic issues that men suffer and respect for the different anatomy of each sex. So here, we will use the term “Pelvic Health” and “Women’s Health” somewhat interchangeably, using Pelvic Health to describe issues of both sexes and women’s health where information is more related to women.



# Who is it for?

If you have any concerns about the area between your knees and your lower back (i.e. your pelvis, hips and lumbar spine) – then a pelvic health assessment could be worth considering. Both men and women have a pelvis and a pelvic floors and can suffer from dysfunction in this area, usually from different causes for each gender.

The types of conditions a pelvic health physiotherapist treats in men and women include:

- Pelvic Pain: in the front, back or sides of your pelvis or lower back
- Incontinence: (more details below) may be urinary, faecal or wind
- Abdominal wall separation: Diagnosis, assessment and treatment
- Constipation

Pelvic issues are much more common than you think – according to the Continence Foundation of Australia 10% of men and 38% of women suffer from incontinence and over half of them are aged over 50. Sadly, 70% of people never seek help for a condition that is largely treatable with advice and exercises.

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# Prolapse and Incontinence

Incontinence is not uncommon (it's the most common condition we see), but that doesn't make it pleasant or optimal for daily life.

Prolapse describes when the pelvic organs drop down into or through the pelvic floor. Prolapse and incontinence are different conditions, they are both related to a reduction in support to structures within the pelvis. Search the resources available on The Continence Foundation of Australia's website for great information.

Incontinence is a complex issue, with different types caused by different issues and needing a targeted approach. A person can be incontinent of urine or faeces or both and not all the time.

## Types of Incontinence:

- Urge Urinary incontinence: Unable to make it to the toilet in time when you feel the urge to urinate.
- Stress Urinary incontinence: When you leak a small amount with exercise, laughing, coughing or sneezing
- Loss of bowel control, involuntary loss of wind.
- Unable to make it to the toilet in time when you feel the urge to defecate
- Urge frequency: Needing to go to the toilet unusually regularly during the day or night, or both.

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# Pelvic Floor

Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises can help reduce incontinence in pregnancy and after childbirth (1)

## Did you know...

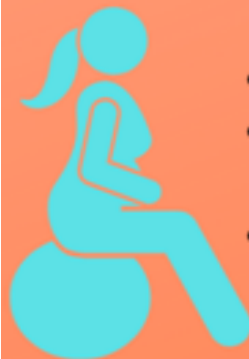


- 1 in 3 women develop urinary incontinence after childbirth



- 1 in 10 women develop faecal incontinence after childbirth

## Pelvic floor muscle exercises should:



- be assessed by a trained professional
- start in the second trimester
- could form part of a supervised exercise class 1-3 x week
- be encouraged daily at home



Exercises should focus on strength, power, endurance and coordination



Speak with your physiotherapist for more information and to make sure you are doing them correctly

# What to expect

## How it starts

Firstly, we talk. We respect that many people find these discussions uncomfortable and sometimes embarrassing. But we can assure you that we listen without judgement (we've heard it all before!) and there is absolutely nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed of.

A detailed history of your pelvic floor function is required to help clearly diagnose the issue and provide the right advice and management of your condition. This is achieved through discussion and questionnaires.

The questionnaire we use asks questions relating to your continence, prolapse, pain and sexual function symptoms. It may also involve completing a bladder/bowel diary.

Not sure if it's right for you?

Book a free, confidential discovery call with our women's health physios to discuss your questions.

Book online today: [tinyurl.com/pybooking](https://tinyurl.com/pybooking)

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# For Women

## Pre. during or post pregnancy

Women's health physiotherapy can support reproductive and pelvic health throughout the lifespan:

- Pre-pregnancy assessments of pelvic, hip and low back function and strength
- During pregnancy: advice and treatment for pain, weakness and pelvic issues
- Post pregnancy - early to support recovery for whichever delivery method you have
- Post pregnancy - support through the rest of the lifespan



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# Post-Pregnancy Physio

Seeing a physiotherapist following pregnancy will typically involve the following:

- A detailed discussion about relevant experiences and symptoms
- Pelvic floor assessment
- Abdominal separation ultrasound assessment
- Advice and exercise prescription, relevant to your recovery and any individual concerns
  - Advice and exercise prescription to prevent
  - pelvic floor issues in the future
  - Guidance for safe return to exercise

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# What to expect

## The next step

Next, we assess your pelvis to determine if it is functioning to it's optimal capacity. And if not, we start to work out why this is the case and what we can do about it.

The types of assessment (from the outside or the inside) is completely dependent on your condition and your comfort level: these assessments are only undertaken after discussion and your full consent.

Examples of the types of assessments performed include:

- A hands-on assessment of the pelvis from the outside, examining the bones, joints and muscles
- Assessment of the abdominal wall or pelvic floor with ultrasound
- Where indicated: observation of the pelvic floor may occur, or an internal vaginal examination may be performed

A combination of assessment techniques will provide us with information to assist in the appropriate treatment and management plan for your condition.

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# Internal Examinations

## *Do I have to have an internal examination?*

No, this is completely your choice. The internal examination will be explained in full and we will ensure you are as comfortable as possible and provide plenty of reassurance.

## *What will happen during the examination?*

Wear comfortable clothing, for an internal examination you will be asked to undress from the waist down and lie on the treatment bed with a towel covering you.

The examination involves insertion of a gloved finger into the vagina. Light pressure will be applied, you may be asked to perform some pelvic floor contractions to assist in assessing what may be causing your symptoms. It may also just involve observation of the pelvic floor area.

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# Breath and the Pelvic Floor

The way you breath through movement can be used to optimise your pelvic floor function.

The borders of your abdomen include the diaphragm at the top and your pelvic floor at the bottom. When you take a deep breath, the diaphragm lowers, expanding your belly.

Without trying, you might hold onto a breath, in order to complete a difficult task or activity. This increases your abdominal pressure, the pressure above your pelvic floor.

Take good care of your pelvic floor by taking long continuous breaths when you exercise.



# Breath and Movement

Try the exercise below to build awareness of your breath during exercise

Find a comfortable sitting position on a chair or laying on your back with feet on the floor and place one hand on your belly. Relax your shoulders.

1. Take five slow breaths, feeling your belly and lower ribcage expand in your hands as you inhale.
2. Place your hands by your side, relaxed.
3. Inhale to prepare
4. Exhale and lift one foot from the floor gently.
5. Inhale and place your foot back down.
6. Repeat with the other leg.

Repeat the above exercises, adding an extra challenge. Try to keep your pelvis facing forwards throughout the movement.

You can incorporate these breathing principles in all exercises. Exhaling during the difficult part of exercise can prevent you holding your breath and feel easier.



# Special Offers

## *Option 1*

Book a free, confidential discovery call with our women's health physiotherapist:.

## *Option 2*

Book an appointment for Women's Health or Pelvic Health consult. Enjoy 10% off when you mention this e-book or use the discount code WH2022

To book: Call us on 8538 8558  
or book online at: [tinyurl.com/pybooking](https://tinyurl.com/pybooking)  
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