

Pelvic Floor Therapy With Stimulation: Regaining Control of Your Pelvis

What Is the Pelvic Floor?

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles that attach to the front, back, and sides of the pelvic bone and sacrum. Like a sling or hammock, these muscles support organs of the pelvis, including the bladder, vagina, uterus, and rectum. Coordinated contraction and relaxation of muscles of the pelvic floor allow for urination, bowel movements, and sexual intercourse. Weakness in pelvic floor muscles is a cause of urinary or fecal incontinence, while abnormal tension or spasm of pelvic floor muscles can cause sexual pain, genital pain, pelvic pain, bladder pain, overactive bladder, or bowel urgency.

What Is Pelvic Floor Therapy?

Pelvic floor therapy is a specialized technique that helps a woman learn how to contract and relax her pelvic floor muscles. Those who have weak muscles resulting in urine or stool leakage can learn to strengthen the pelvic floor. Those who have tense pelvic muscles and pain can learn to relax the pelvic floor. Patients have regular sessions with a technician specially trained in pelvic floor therapy.

Is This the Same as Kegel Exercises?

Pelvic floor therapy is not the same as Kegel exercises because the exercise technique is more effective than Kegels, and it is monitored. Using sophisticated computerized equipment, your pelvic therapy technician will measure contraction and relaxation of your pelvic floor muscles while you perform exercises. In contrast, Kegel exercises are often done incorrectly, which can sometimes have the effect of complicating the problem. Your pelvic floor technician will teach you how your actions produce results, so you can become well trained on proper technique. Monitored exercise combined with **pelvic floor stimulation** (see below) can provide significant improvement in muscle, bowel, and bladder control, as well as eliminating pain related to pelvic floor spasm.

What Is Pelvic Floor Stimulation?

Mild painless electrical stimulation aids in muscle re-education and strengthening. Depending on the settings, stimulation may be used to rehabilitate and strengthen weak pelvic floor muscles or to reduce spasm in over-tense pelvic floor muscles.

Who Can Benefit from Pelvic Floor Therapy?

Pelvic Floor Therapy can improve or eliminate a variety of conditions, including but not limited to:

Urinary Incontinence	Pain with Intercourse
Overactive Bladder	Genital or Vaginal Pain
Frequent Urination	Bladder Pain
Interstitial Cystitis	Fecal incontinence
Chronic Pelvic Pain	Chronic Constipation

Patients Find Pelvic Floor Therapy is Favorable Because:

- Treatment is non-invasive and painless.
- It has a high success rate.
- It is safe, and has no significant side effects.

Don't Let Embarrassment Stop You From Receiving Help!

Women often feel embarrassed and suffer in silence with these problems. Please do not allow fear to prevent you from getting the help you need. Join those who have regained confidence and freedom through this effective treatment!

What to Expect with Pelvic Floor Therapy with Stimulation (PFT)

You will meet with a pelvic therapy technician, a female staff member specially trained to perform these procedures and, with sensitivity, guide her patients through the process. Here is what to expect during a PFT session:

- Pelvic Floor Rehabilitation Through Monitored Exercises. Sophisticated instrumentation is used to determine that the correct muscles are being contracted, and to reveal when a muscle is becoming fatigued. Using this information, an exercise plan is developed with specific muscle strengthening instruction, much like a personal trainer in a gym.
- Pelvic Floor Stimulation. A vaginal sensor, the size of a tampon, is used to deliver a mild painless electrical stimulation to the pelvic floor muscles, which will cause them to contract. Patients describe the stimulation as a tingling feeling, not painful. This process helps to strengthen the muscles and teaches the brain and pelvic muscles to work together properly. The strength of the muscle contractions will be displayed on a monitor, and this aids the pelvic floor technician in directing therapy and exercise recommendations.
- Education and Updates on Progress. Between visits you will keep a log of symptoms. During follow up visits, your pelvic therapy technician will observe your progress by discussing your experiences during the past week, and watching the computer monitor as you contract your pelvic floor muscles. She will also provide education and help determine other factors that may be causing your symptoms, such as dietary and other habits that may contribute to pelvic floor conditions.
- Visit Frequency and Duration. Visits usually last about 45 minutes. A positive change in symptoms should be noticed by the third or fourth weekly visit. This does not mean symptoms are completely gone by then, but encouraging improvement will likely be noticed by this point.
- Vaginal Estrogen Therapy. The vagina and bladder both need estrogen to be happy. For women with low estrogen levels, such as those in mid-life and beyond, we often prescribe a low dose vaginal estrogen treatment. These products localize estrogen to the vagina and adjacent bladder, and systemic absorption is negligible. This is a helpful component of treatment for most cases of pelvic floor or bladder dysfunction.

Home Exercises and Follow Up Visits

If indicated for your specific disorder, you may be asked to perform exercises daily at home, and it's very important to faithfully follow these instructions. The goal is to see progress each time you visit. After the initial visit where a treatment plan is established, you will be scheduled to return for therapy sessions on a weekly basis.

Consistency is Important

It is important for pelvic floor therapy to be consistent and regular. Large gaps between sessions may cause setbacks in progress, and may require an increase in the total number of sessions to complete treatment.

When Should You Skip a Therapy Session?

If you develop a condition that might antagonize the pelvic floor muscles, treatments may best be postponed until the condition resolves. Examples are urinary tract or vaginal infection, IBS diarrhea flare-up, or upper respiratory infection with excessive coughing. It's best to discuss any concerns with your pelvic floor technician before deciding whether you should to skip a session.

Caution: If you receive PFT as treatment for Pain (pain with intercourse, bladder pain, etc)...

During the time you are receiving PFT sessions it is best to abstain from sexual intercourse until you reach a certain point in therapy, which your technician will identify for you. The pelvic floor needs some degree of rehabilitation before stressing it with the challenge of penetration and/or the neuromuscular event of orgasm.

Periodic Tune Ups

Given focus and attention, with treatment over a few weeks of time, pelvic floor problems can be greatly improved or totally eliminated. However, since these problems are often longstanding before treatment, they may flare up periodically after therapy. Follow up or maintenance sessions can be scheduled to keep the pelvic floor in good condition.