How Physical Therapy Can Help…
Dyspareunia: Pain with Intercourse

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What are some common reasons for pain upon initial penetration?

A: Some causes may be irritation of the external genitalia (vulvodynia / vaginismus), decreased mobility due to scar tissue from a biopsy or episiotomy, and tightness of the introitus tissue (opening of the vagina).

Q: What are some of the causes of deeper penetration pain or positional pain?

A: A very common cause is tight and short pelvic floor muscles and/or decreased mobility of the ligaments of the cervix. As women age and hormones change, thinning of the tissue in some women may occur which can be addressed by a physician.

Q: Do Kegel exercises and inner thigh squeezes help?

A: These exercises can be counter productive for people who have pelvic floor muscles which are tight or in spasm.
Dyspareunia

Dyspareunia is recurrent and persistent genital pain associated with sexual activity, in either the male or female.

There are dozens of possible causes of dyspareunia which can be either physical or emotional. Potential physical causes include: vaginal dryness, hormonal issues, episiotomy scars, nerve impingement, immobile cervix, mal-aligned tailbone and tight pelvic floor muscles.

Pelvic floor muscles run from the pubic bone towards the tailbone, with various attachments on the sides of the pelvis (see figure 1). These muscles hold up the bowel, bladder, and uterus (in women). During intercourse, these muscles need to be in a relaxed state. Some people have a difficult time relaxing these muscles due to various reasons such as mechanical dysfunctions, stress and possibly people with a history of abuse.

Men also can have pain with intercourse, including pain with erection and/or pain with ejaculation.

We advise that you see your doctor to be cleared of serious pathology before requesting a referral for a physical therapy evaluation.

How Physical Therapy Can Help

Physical therapy can help by treating the musculoskeletal causes of this problem reducing the tension of the pelvic floor muscles and thus reducing or eliminating the symptoms. Physical therapy is an adjunct/supplement to your physician’s treatment.

Evaluation/treatment may consist of: checking and re-aligning the pelvis, mobilizing the tailbone, mobilizing the ligaments associated with the cervix, soft tissue work on the inner thighs (adductors), working on mobility of any episiotomy scars, and working vaginally (for women) and rectally (for men) on the pelvic floor muscles to normalize the resting tone (reducing muscle tension). Treatment will also include patient education on how to relax the muscles, as well as various positions that may aide in decreased pain with intercourse.

The patient is always in control during internal pelvic floor work. The work may be tender but it will be kept in a range where the patient can still be able to relax his/her pelvic floor muscles.

About Pelvic Therapy Specialists

Pelvic Therapy Specialists, PC offers high quality physical therapy treatment and personalized care for pelvic floor disorders and uro-gynecological diagnoses.

Our practice is different to most physical therapy clinics as we are dedicated solely to treating lower back and pelvic regional diagnoses.

Our therapists combined have 300+ hours of specific pelvic and spinal related continuing education training. Patients are treated solely by licensed physical therapists with doctorates primarily utilizing one on one manual therapy techniques and exercise instruction.

In addition to partnering with a large number of health insurance companies we also welcome "out-of-network" insurance and will work with all patients to help minimize treatment fees.

Feel free to contact us at info@pelvictherapy.com or visit our website at www.pelvictherapy.com