

BROADCAST-Pelvic Floor Therapy: A Newer Option for Women and men

If you've ever had pelvic pain, bladder trouble or some sort of sexual function issues, chances are good it's connected to problems with the muscles in your pelvic floor. However, pelvic floor dysfunction (PDF) is often misdiagnosed or untreated.

[Pelvic Floor Muscle Therapy](#) is an emerging area of treatment that can help men and women with chronic pain, frequent urination, incontinence or painful intercourse. Rachel Williams, a physical therapist based at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center in Alton says in some cases, patients can benefit from internal muscle manipulation.

“Sometimes if somebody is not comfortable with that internal treatment, we can just do stretching and relaxation techniques but there's also a way of doing internal manipulation to those muscles and some kind of abdominal myofascial release (gentle sustained pressure on connective tissue) to kind of release some of the restrictions,” according to Williams. (:15)

When a patient of Williams' who we'll call Susan for privacy reasons was fighting for her life with stage 4 colon cancer in 2014, she wasn't thinking about painful intercourse years later – something that created problems when she received treatment and was cancer free.

“I never knew what you could accomplish with this therapy. I was truly blessed.” She gushed, “After losing other things, it's wonderful to get this part of my life back.”

Men Benefit from Pelvic Floor Therapy

Fifteen percent of adult men worldwide suffer from pelvic pain and it's often because of prostate issues or irritable bowel syndrome. As part of her approach Williams looks at other factors that can be contributing to the pain or issues related to pelvic floor dysfunction.

“We look at soaps. We look at diet. We look at lifestyle. We look at behavior; stress. Stress is huge.” Williams explained, “When you're stressed, your muscles spasm. Your pelvic floor is a muscle and the next thing you know, you're going to the bathroom all the time.” (:14)

Williams says even smoking can contribute to pelvic pain and bladder and sexual function issues. But she advises asking your doctor about them.

“People forget that your bladder is a muscle so it can be trained just like any muscle in your body. So, there is a lot of education on bladder health; what is normal. People think, 'Oh I just get up and go to the bathroom three times throughout the night, isn't that normal?' No. that's not really normal,” according to Williams. (:13)

Williams suggest specifically asking if you might be helped by pelvic floor therapy. It can be prescribed separately or along with other treatments or medications.

“I'm glad to speak to the physician and they are pleasantly surprised with the patients' success.” (:07)

Pelvic floor physical therapy is covered by most insurance, although coverage may vary.

(for website copy)

What Does Pelvic Floor Therapy Involve?

- Biofeedback - a process that allows an individual to monitor the ability to contract or relax a muscle
- Exercises for the pelvic floor muscles that support the bladder (i.e. Kegels)
- Trigger point and myofascial release techniques
- Diet modifications
- Lifestyle changes
- Physiological quieting techniques