

# Pelvic pain? Physical therapy can help.

Pelvic pain is defined as persistent (longer than six months) unexplained pain in the lower abdomen or pelvic region without evidence of organic disease.

## Common symptoms include:

- **Urinary urgency or frequency:** Normal voiding occurs about every two to four hours during waking hours and up to one time per night. Voiding any more than this would be considered urinary frequency.
- **Bladder retention:** There should be about 50cc of fluid left in the bladder after it empties. Feeling as if the bladder never fully empties, or having more than 50cc after voiding, would be considered bladder retention.
- **Dyspareunia:** Defined as pain during or after intercourse.
- **Pain with bowel movements:** Passing a bowel movement should not be painful. Sometimes pain can be caused by the stool being too hard. Other times pain can occur because muscles around the anus and rectum cannot relax enough to comfortably let the stool pass.
- **Pain in the area of the coccyx, pubis, or abdominals:** The pelvic floor muscles attach to the tailbone and pubis. When these muscles are in spasm, they make these areas painful with activities like sitting, changing positions, having a bowel movement, or intercourse.

Sometimes the symptoms listed above will involve ligaments, muscles, or other soft tissues, making the physical therapist uniquely suited to manage the symptoms.

## How can a physical therapist help?

A physical therapist is a health professional whose education and knowledge focuses on anatomy, physiology, and muscle function. Since pelvic pain is commonly a muscle or soft tissue problem, the physical therapist is able to help manage your symptoms.

Treatment might include manual therapy techniques, pelvic floor and abdominal strengthening exercises, postural and body mechanics training, bladder retraining, biofeedback, relaxation techniques, or electrical stimulation.



If you'd like to learn more about how our women's health program can help, please contact SSM Health Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation at **573-761-9178**.

Available at the **Hartsfield YMCA**.

[ssmhealth.com](http://ssmhealth.com)