

Pelvic Floor 101

Introduction to Pelvic Floor Health
and Core Stability

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Intentions for Today

- To educate: the more we know, the less scary these issues are
- To ignite conversation: the more we talk about this, the more we realize we are not alone
- Empowerment - knowledge creates possibility, we can talk to our doctor and ask good questions and get the answers we need
- Get ready... this is a sensitive topic - the information contained in these slides is generalized for the sake of education. Everything needs to go through your own lense taking into account your unique life experience.

Your Pelvic Floor

- What is the pelvic floor?
 - Simply speaking, a sling or hammock of muscles and other soft tissue to support your organs
 - Of particular importance are the orifices:
 - Urinary sphincter - implications for men and women: weakness caused by too much tension in this area (specifically the bulbospongiosus muscle) can lead to stress incontinence and other incontinence issues.
 - Anus - levator ani - holds a 90 degree kink in the bowel to hold contents inside until ready to have a bowel movement. It is also responsible for supporting the rectum and vagina and resists intra-abdominal pressure
 - Vagina - sexual function, menstrual cycle, birth

Video of Anatomy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3BBAMWm2Eo>

- This video is a great tutorial on the anatomy of the pelvic floor.
- Pay attention to obturator internus and piriformis - hip function is important for pelvic floor health!

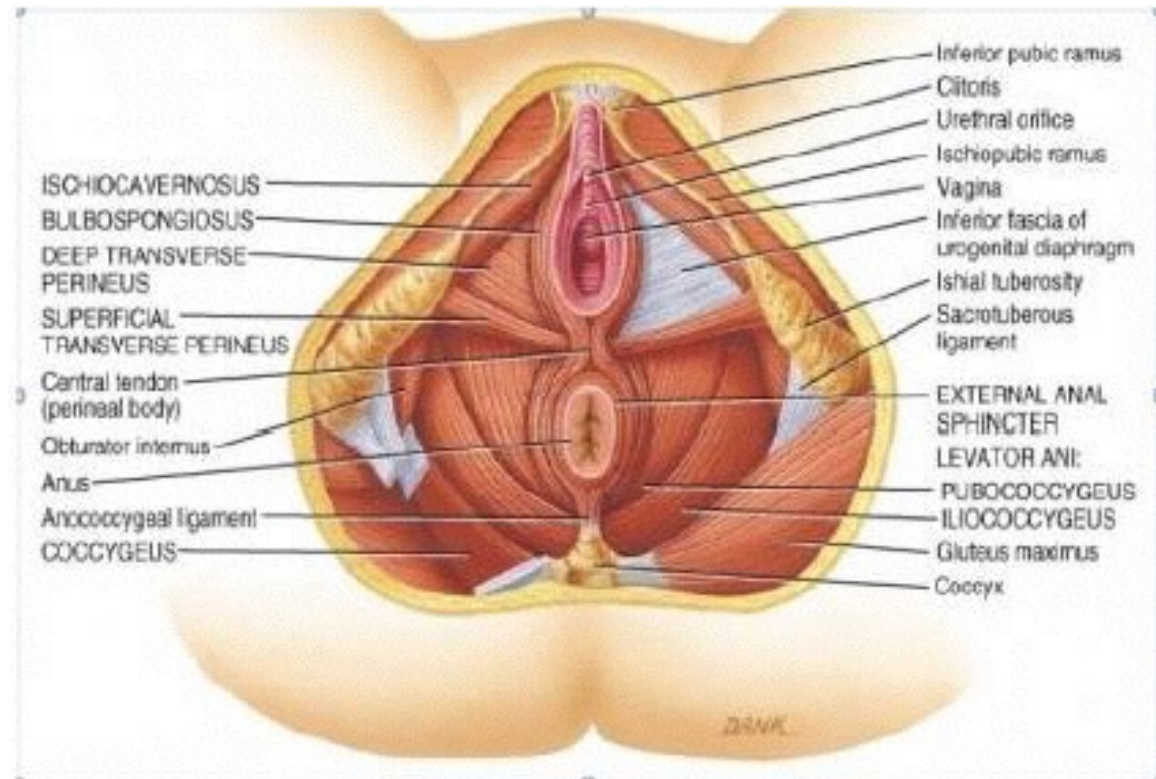
Symptoms of Dysfunction

- Pelvic pain - unexplained pain in the genitals and or low back
- Painful intercourse (dry vagina, tight muscles)
- Erectile dysfunction (yes, pelvic floor treatment and awareness can resolve or significantly reduce this!!) The bulbospongiosus muscle in men allows the penis to engorge, contracts with orgasm and contracts to empty the urethra of urine after urination. Men should kegel too!
- Bladder urgency;incontinence - incomplete voiding, stop and go, stress leaking
- Constipation - the levator ani holding the 90 kink and not relaxing for a bowel movement
- Prolapse - bladder, uterine, bowel - tissue herniating through the orifices

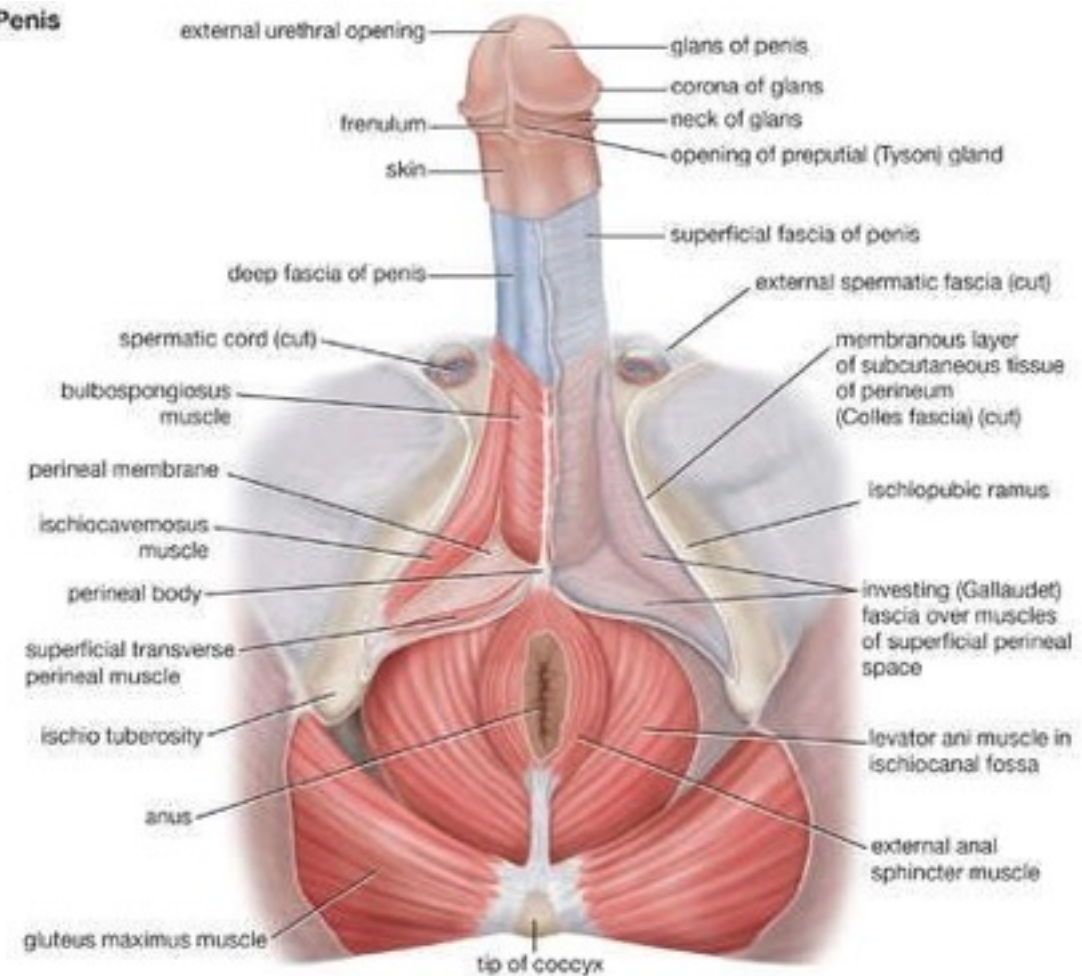
Caring for the Pelvic Floor

- Improving mechanics of breathing. The more space for breath - suppleness in the ribcage, freedom of movement for the diaphragm and suppleness through the bowels and pelvic floor all aid in overall health and function.
- “Kegels” - training the muscles of the pelvic floor to contract **and release** in a healthy, responsive way
- Toileting (“squatty potty” - puts the knees above the hips to facilitate relaxation of the bowel and avoid increasing pressure downward with bowel movements).
 - constipation and bearing down - you should never push with force when attempting a bowel movement. Close your fist and bring it to your mouth - try to blow air through a tight fist as you relax your bowel - this is the most pressure you should create (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbYWhdLO43Q>)
- Hormonal changes
 - moisture and lubrication - Mae Moisturizer/lubrication by Damiva designed for women with pH balance in mind.
 - effects on tissue - thinning and drying of the tissue - vaginal atrophy - moisture and exercise will help. Sexual intercourse and orgasm can be helpful as well because of muscle contraction and hormonal release (if this is not painful and the relationship is balanced and consensual)
 - chronic yeast and/or urinary tract infections - imbalance of pH can be at the root - talk to your doctor and try a product like Mae

Female and Male PF Anatomy



Penis



PF Informed Fitness

- Considerations: muscle tone and effort, contract and release, muscles can be locked short or long - if the breath is held and there is too much bracing, there can be an increase in intra-abdominal pressure like bearing down to perform an exercise should be avoided. Take time to train a healthy, biomechanically sound system before adding too much load.
- Intra-abdominal pressure (uddihyana bhandha) “hypopressive technique” - this technique reverses intra-abdominal pressure and alleviates pressure on the abdomen and pelvic floor. You can find practitioners at <https://hypopressivescanada.com>
- Impact activities: running, jumping, heavy lifting - again - these can be too jarring on muscles that are locked in chronic tension. A supple, healthy pelvic floor can respond to load - this requires good hip and shoulder function as well. The body is a system!
- Core stability work (strength is dependent upon suppleness) - lock and load or bracing patterns do not aid in core stability. Core stability is largely dependent upon being able to respond to load - good biomechanics, good breathing and a healthy nervous system all play important roles.
 - contraindications for diastases recti - avoid tenting of the rectus abdominus. Taking shoulders and/or feet off the floor at the same time is a position that will create too much pressure in the months shortly after giving birth (boat pose in yoga, sit ups, also plank are all contraindicated).

Therapies

- Pelvic floor physiotherapy
 - Who should go? Everyone interested in learning more about their pelvic floor! Knowledge is power.
 - What is involved? Often a pelvic exam is carried out (with consent) while they have you breath and perform different contracts. Release of overly tight muscles may be performed manually and other treatments to improve proprioception to the area and over all health and function.
- Yoga/movement therapy - improving biomechanics and breathing through movement

Nervous System

- Chronic stress - spending too much time in the sympathetic nervous system causes your system overall to always be anticipating threat. These over loads all of the protective systems in the body - it is hard to improve health without addressing this first.
- Mindfulness - becoming aware of your state, knowing what your coping strategies are and learning to engage rather than react are all so important to a balanced system
- Taking time to rest and restore - so vital for an overall perception of safety in life. Doing activities that bring you joy, taking time to rest and rejuvenate so that your body can heal and thrive in the way it is designed to do for you.

Referrals

- **Yoga Therapy**

- Sharyl Paull, Instill Yoga Therapy
Serving NW Calgary
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www.instillyoga.com
- Dawn Ross, Bit by Bit Bodyworks
Serving South Calgary
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- **Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy**

- Kristie Norquay - take a trip to the mountains for this lovely lady!
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(250) 344-6654
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