

GI Hub

Pelvic Floor Dysfunction Handout

Pelvic floor dysfunction means the muscles and tissues that support your bladder, bowel, and reproductive organs are not working as they should. This can cause a range of symptoms that affect your daily life and comfort. [\[1\]\[2\]\[3\]](#)

Symptoms:

- Trouble controlling urine (leaking or needing to go often)
- Trouble controlling bowel movements (leaking or constipation)
- Feeling of heaviness or bulging in the pelvis (pelvic organ prolapse)
- Pain in the pelvis, lower back, or during sex
- Difficulty starting or stopping urination or bowel movements [\[1\]\[2\]\[3\]\[4\]\[5\]](#)

Diagnosis:

Your healthcare provider will ask about your symptoms and do a physical exam. Sometimes, special tests are needed, like:

- Urodynamic studies (to check bladder function)
- Anal manometry (to check bowel function)
- Imaging tests (ultrasound or MRI) to look at the pelvic floor muscles and organs [\[1\]\[6\]\[7\]](#)

These tests help find out which part of the pelvic floor is causing problems and guide the best treatment plan.

Treatment:

Most people start with **conservative treatments**:

- **Pelvic floor physical therapy:** Special exercises to strengthen or relax the pelvic floor muscles, often taught by a trained therapist. This is safe, effective, and can help with leaking, prolapse, pain, and other symptoms. [\[3\]\[4\]\[5\]\[8\]\[9\]\[10\]\[11\]](#)

- **Lifestyle changes:** Managing weight, avoiding constipation, and not straining during bowel movements.
- **Medications:** Sometimes used for bladder or bowel symptoms.
- **Devices:** Pessaries (small devices placed in the vagina) can help with prolapse or leaking.[\[4\]](#)
- **Biofeedback and electrical stimulation:** These help you learn to control your pelvic muscles.[\[9\]\[10\]](#)

If these treatments do not help, surgery may be considered for severe prolapse or incontinence.[\[4\]\[12\]](#)

Pelvic floor dysfunction is common and treatable. Early diagnosis and starting physical therapy can greatly improve symptoms and quality of life.[\[3\]\[4\]\[5\]\[8\]\[9\]\[10\]\[11\]](#)

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