

## Pelvic Pain

Pelvic pain is felt in the lower abdomen, pelvis, or perineum, and is considered to be "chronic" when it lasts for more than 6 months. Pain may vary; some people say that it feels like an aching pain, others say that it feels like a burning, sharp, or stabbing pain, or even pins and needles. Additionally, you may have:

- Pain in the hip or buttock
- Pain in the tailbone or pubic bone
- Inability to sit for normal periods of time
- Pain in the joints of the pelvis
- Pain with sexual intercourse
- Tender points in the muscles of the abdomen
- Reduced ability to move your hips or low back
- Difficulty walking, sleeping, and doing physical activities
- Urinary frequency, urgency, or incontinence
- Painful bowel movements
- Constipation, or straining with bowel movements



Pelvic pain has many possible causes:

- Pregnancy and childbirth, when changing hormone levels can affect the muscles and cause the joints to become more "loose"
- Pelvic joint problems
- Muscle weakness or imbalance within the muscles of the pelvic floor, trunk, or pelvis
- Lack of coordination in the muscles that control the bowel and bladder
- Tender points in the muscles of the pelvic floor
- Pressure on 1 or more nerves in the pelvis
- Weakness in the muscles of the pelvis and pelvic floor
- Scar tissue after abdominal or pelvic surgery, such as a C-section or episiotomy (incision), or as a result of a tear in the vaginal area
- Disease
- Pelvic organ prolapse, a shift in the position of the pelvic organs

## HOW CAN A PHYSICAL THERAPIST HELP?

Based on examination results, your physical therapist will select treatments designed to:

- Reduce muscle tightness
- Improve your muscle strength
- Improve how you use your muscles (which in turns helps reduce your pain and increase your ability to perform your roles in the home, in the community, and at work.)

Depending on your symptoms and level of discomfort, your physical therapist may decide to use biofeedback to make you aware of how your pelvic-floor muscles work, and how you can control them better. The therapist also may use electrical stimulation to improve awareness of your muscles, and increase muscle strength.