

INNER CIRCLE Insights

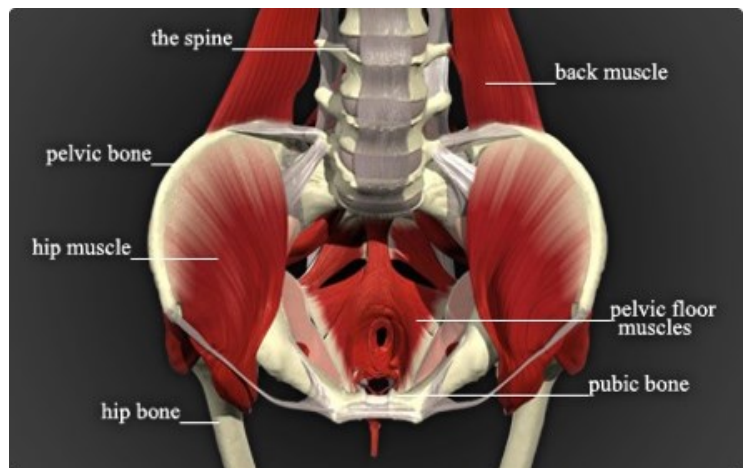
Male Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

The words pelvic floor dysfunction (PFD) traditionally leads one to think of women's health issues. It seems logical since approximately 24% of American women experience at least one pelvic floor disorder in their lifetime. In reality, PFD is a serious problem for men as well, with approximately 2-10% of adult males experiencing symptoms comparable with chronic prostatitis; 90-95% of which are in absence of prostate infection or pathology and 4.4% of adult males experiencing urinary incontinence. Male PFD is discussed very little, often misdiagnosed and therefore, significantly underreported. The fact is that men do have pelvic floor muscles as well and they too are subject to developing restrictions, muscle spasm, lack of coordination and weakness.

Disorders of the male pelvic floor include urinary incontinence, urge/frequency of urination, urinary retention, fecal incontinence, constipation, pelvic pain and sexual dysfunction. Trauma can occur to the male pelvic floor from falls, motor vehicle accidents, surgery, lifting heavy weight combined with straining of the pelvic floor muscles, treatment of cancers of the pelvic region, poor posture, prolonged sitting on hard surfaces or bike riding; just to name of few. A man's pelvic floor is also susceptible to developing inflammation, adhesions, chronic tensions or holding patterns and pelvic organ disease causing an overload on the muscles and the connective tissue (fascia) throughout the pelvis, leading to dysfunction. The majority of cases are treated unsuccessfully with a pharmaceutical regime; which often leads to frustration and decline in the quality of life for patients as symptoms worsen; continuing to affect daily activities and relationships. The muscles of the pelvic floor are often overlooked as a source of the problem and the restriction of the fascia of the pelvis is usually dismissed. Fortunately, research in this field has begun to emerge in the last 10 years which suggests pelvic floor muscle dysfunction is a cause for pelvic floor disorders in men and supports physical therapy as treatment. In 2004, a study by Dorey, Speakman, et al was published in the *British Journal of General Practice* which concluded that pelvic floor muscle exercise and biofeedback had similar results to treatment with Viagra for erectile dysfunction. In 2005, a study by Anderson and Wise published in *The Journal of Urology* concluded that myofascial trigger point release and relaxation training provided relief of pelvic pain and urinary symptoms greater than that of traditional therapy. The research supporting treatment of the pelvic floor with myofascial release (MFR) continues to grow with over 60 years of research into the fascial system and the subsequent development of the manual techniques to treat these somatic dysfunctions.

Physical therapy treatment for PFD includes manual therapy, therapeutic exercise, biofeedback, relaxation training and behavior modifications. Each of these tools used by physical therapists are helpful in providing relief of PFD symptoms; however, it is through Myofascial Release (MFR) that permanent change within the structure and function of the pelvic floor can be attained. MFR, as developed by John Barnes, is an approach that focuses on the body as a whole rather than multiple parts or systems working independent of each other, like a machine. This is because it addresses the fascia, or connective tissue; an uninterrupted tissue that weaves its way through the body like a web, surrounding each part of it and connecting it to the whole; down to the very cells themselves. MFR utilizes gentle pressure over an extended time into restrictions within the myofascial system, affecting a change within the ground substance, or gelatinous component, of the fascia which creates the environment for lasting structural changes. When combined with massage, joint mobilization, exercise and other therapeutic modalities which address the elastic component of the fascia, structural changes are made and the strength that allows the body to hold those changes can then be developed.

Inner Circle is a Physical Therapy and Myofascial Release Center that takes a specialized MFR approach in treating PFD in men, not just in women. We recognize that each patient is a unique individual and while symptoms may be the same or similar to other patients with the same diagnosis; his or her plan of care should be just as unique. This is especially true for patients suffering from any type of PFD. Beginning with an evaluation, our patients are viewed as a whole person from their subjective complaints and history to objective assessment of posture, range of motion, strength and tone throughout muscle and soft tissue. Plans of care are then developed to address the distinct needs of the patient as an individual. In implementing these plans of care, our expertly trained therapists emphasize the "hands-on" nature of MFR followed by use of other manual therapy techniques such as massage, acupressure, muscle energy, joint and soft tissue mobilization; as appropriate, to achieve the patient's goals. Stretching



and strengthening programs are developed to further address the patient's restrictions and weaknesses assisting in correction of the imbalances within the system that are causing stress to the pelvis. Biofeedback, relaxation training, habit training and education are also utilized as needed. Our hope for our patients is not only to help decrease their pain or symptoms but to also improve their quality of life and empower them with knowledge about their pelvic floors and how to maintain the gains made in physical therapy to prevent relapse of symptoms.

Historically, pain and other symptoms of PFD were not discussed due to fear and embarrassment. Though their symptoms are quite different, women and men assumed there was nothing they could do about it but suffer in silence. Fortunately, there is more and more evidence to support physical therapy treatment for PFD. At Inner Circle, we take pelvic floor physical therapy beyond the traditional therapy of Kegels and biofeedback. Our therapists understand the unique differences between the needs and concerns of male and female pelvic floor patients and strive to help our patients heal. If you or your patients are suffering from symptoms of pelvic floor dysfunction or related conditions, Inner Circle Physical Therapy and Myofascial Release Centers can provide the treatment and relief needed.

Professionally Yours,
Teresa Aponte, DPT

For an appointment please call (215) 860-3623

“The Natural Force Within Each of Us is the Greatest Healer of Disease” - Hippocrates