

# THE ROLE OF PHYSIOTHERAPY BEFORE & AFTER CHILD BIRTH



Pregnancy and labour significantly affect a woman's pelvic health making a trained pelvic health physiotherapist an integral part of any woman's prenatal and postpartum care team. Expectant mothers and those immediately post-partum can benefit from a pelvic floor health assessment for common conditions.

## LOW BACK PAIN AND SCIATICA

Low back pain is commonly experienced during pregnancy and after giving birth. Changing hormone levels affects ligaments supporting the lower back area causing weakness during pregnancy and for up to six months after birth. Abdominal and pelvic floor muscles stretch with the growth and birth of the baby. This affects their strength and reduces the support provided to lumbar region and Sacroiliac (SI) joints and can lead to pelvic injury and pain in the low back area which can radiate to legs.

*A pelvic health physiotherapist can manage your pain and teach you proper techniques to help you protect your joints, teach you exercises to keep you fit during your pregnancy and assist with your recovery after giving birth.*

*Clinical Pilates & chiropractic interventions are also proven treatments for lower back pain.*

## DYSPAREUNIA

Dyspareunia or pain during intercourse is another common pain condition. The pain can be on penetration or during sex and is usually caused by scar tissue development and tears during delivery. Other reasons for pain during sex are organ prolapse, vulvodynia, fissures, surgery and menopause.

*A pelvic health physiotherapist will assess the cause of pain internally and can help with scar release to improve tissue mobility, reduce pain, and restore pelvic floor muscle strength. Pelvic floor muscle training is an important component of restoring core strength as you return to your physical activities.*

## **UNIRARY INCONTINENCE**

About 40% of women experience urinary incontinence during pregnancy. This increases their risk for long-term incontinence post-natal. Risk also increases with more difficult deliveries, such as the use of forceps and prolonged delivery.

*Starting pelvic floor muscle training during pregnancy and immediately during post-partum period has been shown to reduce the risk of future urinary incontinence.*

## **DIASTASIS RECTI**

Commonly referred to “Mummy Tummy”, Diastasis Recti is abdominal muscle separation during pregnancy and labour.

*A pelvic health physiotherapist can help ensure the integrity of abdominal muscles is maintained by showing you exercises to perform during pregnancy which aid recovery postpartum where a diastasis is present.*



## **ORGAN PROLAPSE**

Organ prolapse is when pelvic organs such as the bladder start to droop or descend into vagina. This can cause feeling of heaviness in abdomen, pelvis or vagina. As unpleasant as it sounds, many women are unaware that they may have a prolapse.

*Pelvic health physiotherapy has shown 80% success rate in grade 1 prolapse and a significant improvement in grade 2 & 3. The most important benefit is preventing developing a grade 4 prolapses which requires surgery and prolonged rehabilitation.*

## HOW A PHYSIOTHERAPIST CAN HELP ME WITH DELIVERY?

Studies show pre-natal pelvic floor muscle training will lower the rate of prolonged second stage labour and reduce pregnancy related low back and pelvic pain. Just a few sessions with a pelvic health physiotherapist can help you develop better awareness and control of your pelvic floor muscles to prepare you for delivery. You will receive feedback on correct breathing, pushing, and pelvic floor muscle training to reduce urinary incontinence post-partum. Perineal stretching and internal muscle release will also help reduce chances of tearing if you have a tight pelvic floor.

## WILL HAVING A C-SECTION PROTECT ME FROM PELVIC FLOOR DYSFUNCTIONS?

Even if mothers elect for C-section delivery, the weight of the baby during pregnancy still puts pressure on the pelvic floor muscles. C-section scars will require attention post-natal, since tension in the abdominal wall affects tissue mobility in the pelvic floor as well.

## AREN'T KEGELS ENOUGH?

While Kegels will likely be introduced at some point during your treatment program, research shows most women do it incorrectly. A pelvic health physiotherapist performs an internal assessment, provides feedback and teaches the expecting or new mom how to perform these exercises correctly. For women who experience pain and dysfunction due to a tight pelvic floor, Kegels can even worsen the condition.

## We are here to help...

Physiomobility's Pelvic Health program is directed by Ingrid Yu, a physiotherapist with extensive post graduate training in pelvic health physiotherapy. When needed, the physiotherapist may collaborate with our chiropractor, clinical Pilates instructor, registered dietician and homeopath.

We will always be in contact with your referring physician and/or specialist to update them on your progress.



6 Maginn Mews, Suite 211  
Toronto, ON, M3C 0G9  
Shops at Don Mills  
Tel: 416-444-4800  
Fax: 416-444-4811  
[www.physiomobility.com](http://www.physiomobility.com)  
Questions? write to us:  
[care@physiomobility.com](mailto:care@physiomobility.com)

This document is not intended to substitute professional healthcare