

Managing the Impact of Cancer Treatment on Bladder and Sexual Health

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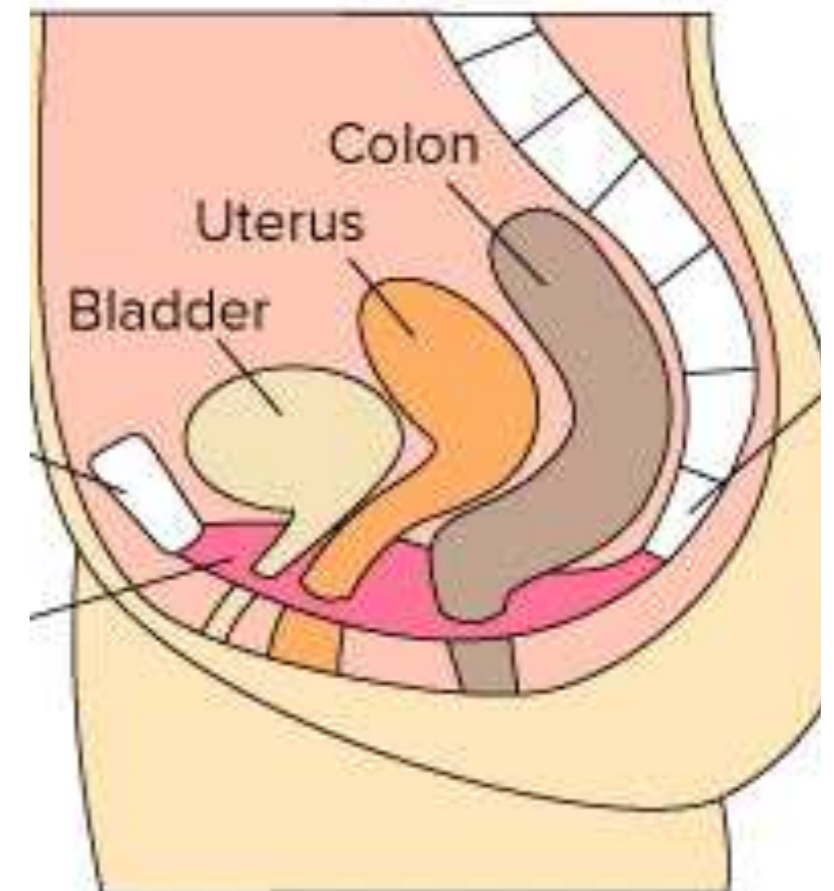
*Registered Physiotherapist
Certified in Pelvic Health Rehabilitation*



TORONTO
PHYSIOTHERAPY

Functions of the Pelvic Floor

- Support for the organs
- Sphincteric-continnence for bladder and bowel
- Sexual-orgasm and erection
- Stability-strength and co-ordination for low back pain, pelvic girdle pain, and hip pain
- Sump pump-pump blood and lymph back to the heart



Pelvic Disorder Risk Factors

- Tissue resection
- Radiation effects (external beam or brachytherapy)
- Estrogen decline
 - Surgical (oophorectomy)
 - Hormone Rx (BrCa population)
 - Menopause (natural or chemo-induced)
- Reconstruction considerations

Radiotherapy Changes

- Advances in technology/medicine allow for more local control of treatment
- Better survival rates
- More survivors living with side effects of treatment (eg therapy-induced vaginal changes)
- Symptoms:
 - Stenosis (vaginal narrowing +/- or shortening)
 - Dryness
 - Painful intercourse (dyspareunia)
 - Edema/telangiectasia ('spider veins')

Estrogen Decline Changes

- Hormone therapy can reduce estrogen levels, leading to early menopause
- BrCa survivors being treated with aromatase inhibitors twice at risk
- Estrogen decline causes:
 - Vaginal dryness
 - Painful intercourse (dyspareunia)
 - Urinary frequency, urgency and/or urge incontinence
 - Recurring urinary tract infections
 - Vulvar tissues may appear pale in colour

Painful Sex

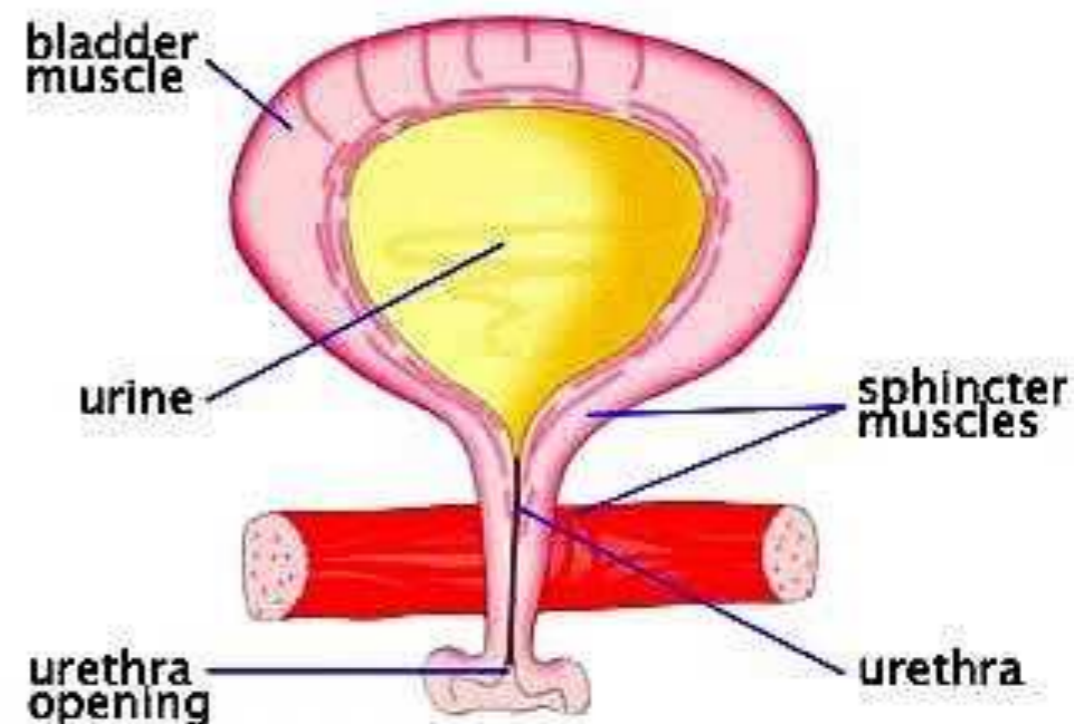
- Over time, changes in the vagina can lead to:
 - Painful sex (dyspareunia) – during sex or hours/days after
 - Pain during gynae exams or tampon use
- Pain can increase tension in the pelvic floor muscles
 - Further exacerbate pain

Pelvic Pain

- Burning or prickling sensation, or sudden sharp pain in the vagina, vulva or perineum
- Pain with light touch to the area (eg. sitting or finger pressure trigger pain)
- Tingling, numbness, or temperature sensitivity (eg. during a bath)

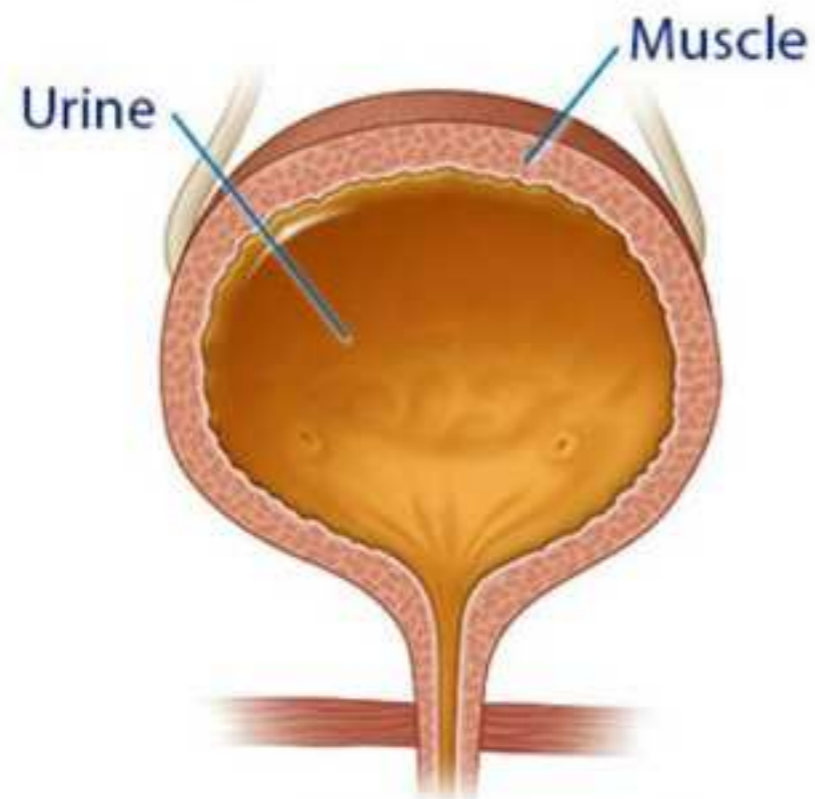
Urinary Frequency, Urgency and Incontinence

- Tension in pelvic floor muscles and increased sensitivity in nerve endings can trigger the urge to urinate
- This can lead to:
 - Strong urges to urinate even though bladder is not full
 - Urinating more than 5-7 times per day (frequency)
 - Urinating at night
 - Incontinence (loss of urine)



Urinary Frequency, Urgency and Incontinence

- Strong urges to urinate even though bladder is not full
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Normal bladder (full)



Overactive bladder

Urinary Tract Infections (UTI)

Estrogen...

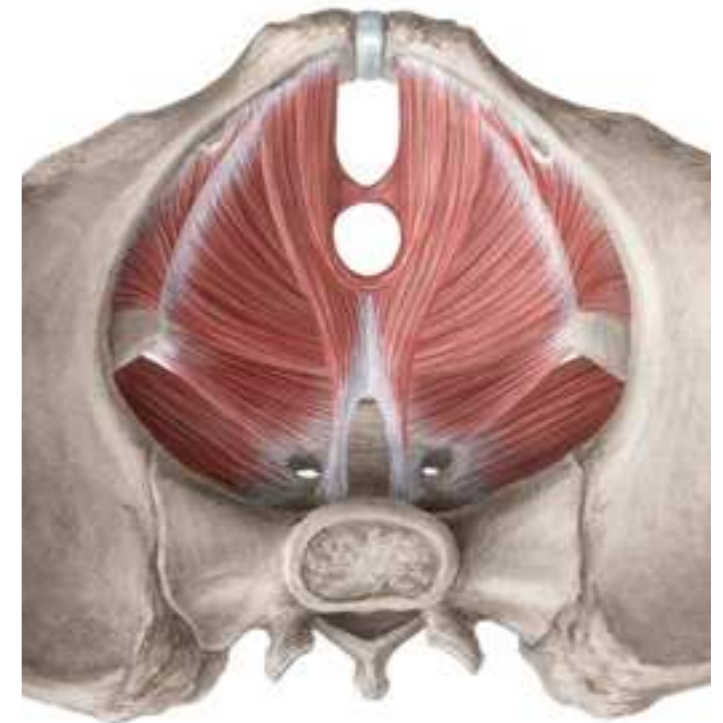
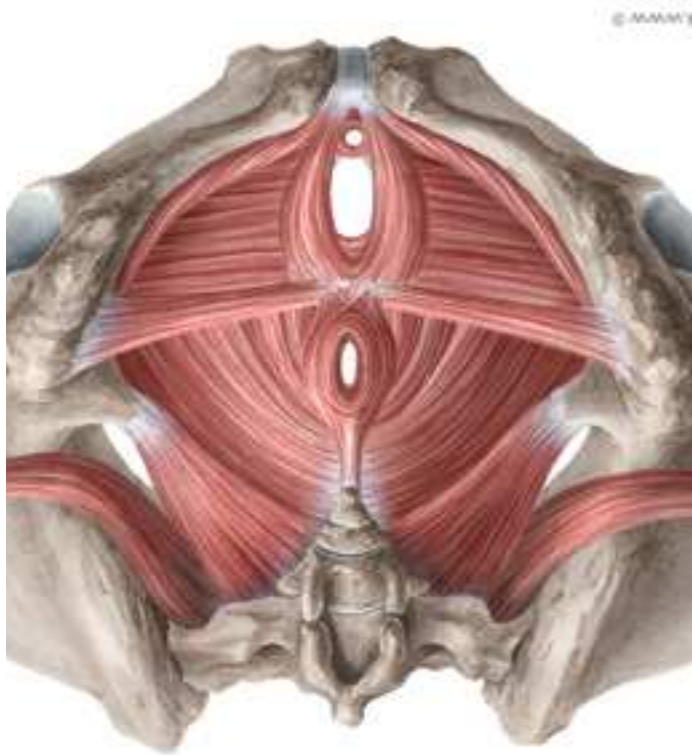
- Supports the immune system in the bladder and urinary tract
- Helps maintain protective linings
- Helps generate a robust immune response to infection

How to Prevent and Treat these Pelvic Health Issues

- Manual Therapy and Self Tools
- Exercises for Pelvic Floor
 - How to Lengthen if Tight
 - How to Strengthen if Weak
- Vaginal Moisturizers
- Lubricants for Sex
- Local Estrogen
- UTI Prevention

Pelvic Physiotherapy

- Certified Physiotherapists perform manual therapy
- Releases tender points and tightness in connective tissue and pelvic floor muscles



Self Tools

- Therawand for self-release
- Dilators for vaginal narrowing



Dilators

- Evidence shows gentle stretching using dilators helps to maintain vaginal elasticity
- Tips for using dilators:
 - Practice regularly (15 minutes/day)
 - Mental relaxation cues
 - Lubrication
 - Involve sex partner and vary positions
- Where to buy:
 - www.vaginismus.com
 - www.goodforher.com
 - www.torontophysiotherapy.ca



Exercises: Lengthen Pelvic Floor

- To *lengthen* tight muscles
- To *decrease* muscle tone
- Reverse Kegels
 - Diaphragm is key

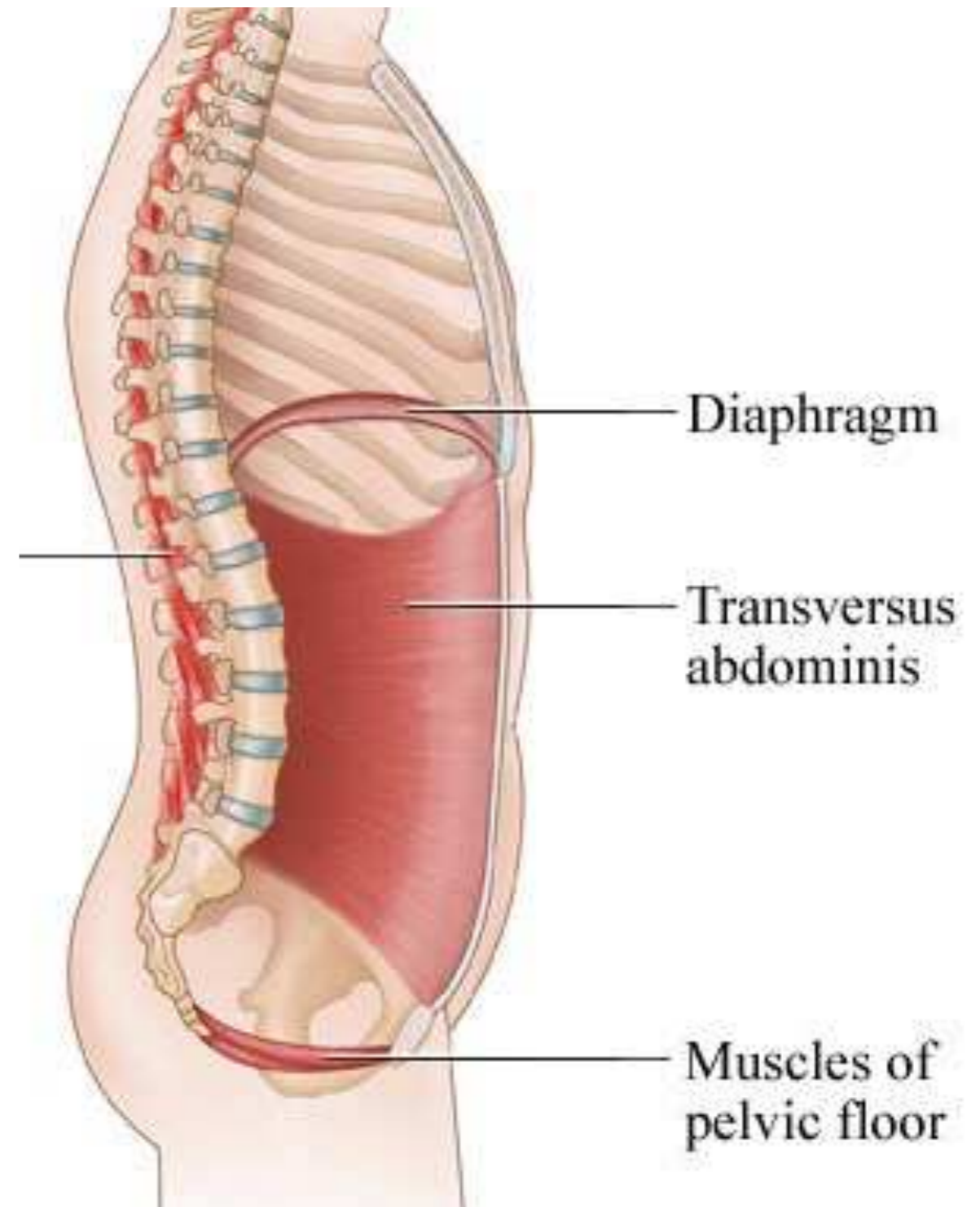


The diaphragm
is shaped
like a parachute



Exercises: Lengthen Pelvic Floor

- Reverse Kegels
 - Diaphragm is key
 - Diaphragm and PFM work together like a piston
 - Breathe in = relax/lengthen pelvic floor



Exercises: Lengthen Pelvic Floor

- Full squat
 - 1/2 way to strengthen
 - Full way to lengthen (buttocks 3-5" off floor)
- Central nervous system
 - Visualization
 - Yoga, Tai Chi, Qi Gong
 - Deep breathing
- Sex often
- Be active (walking, biking...)



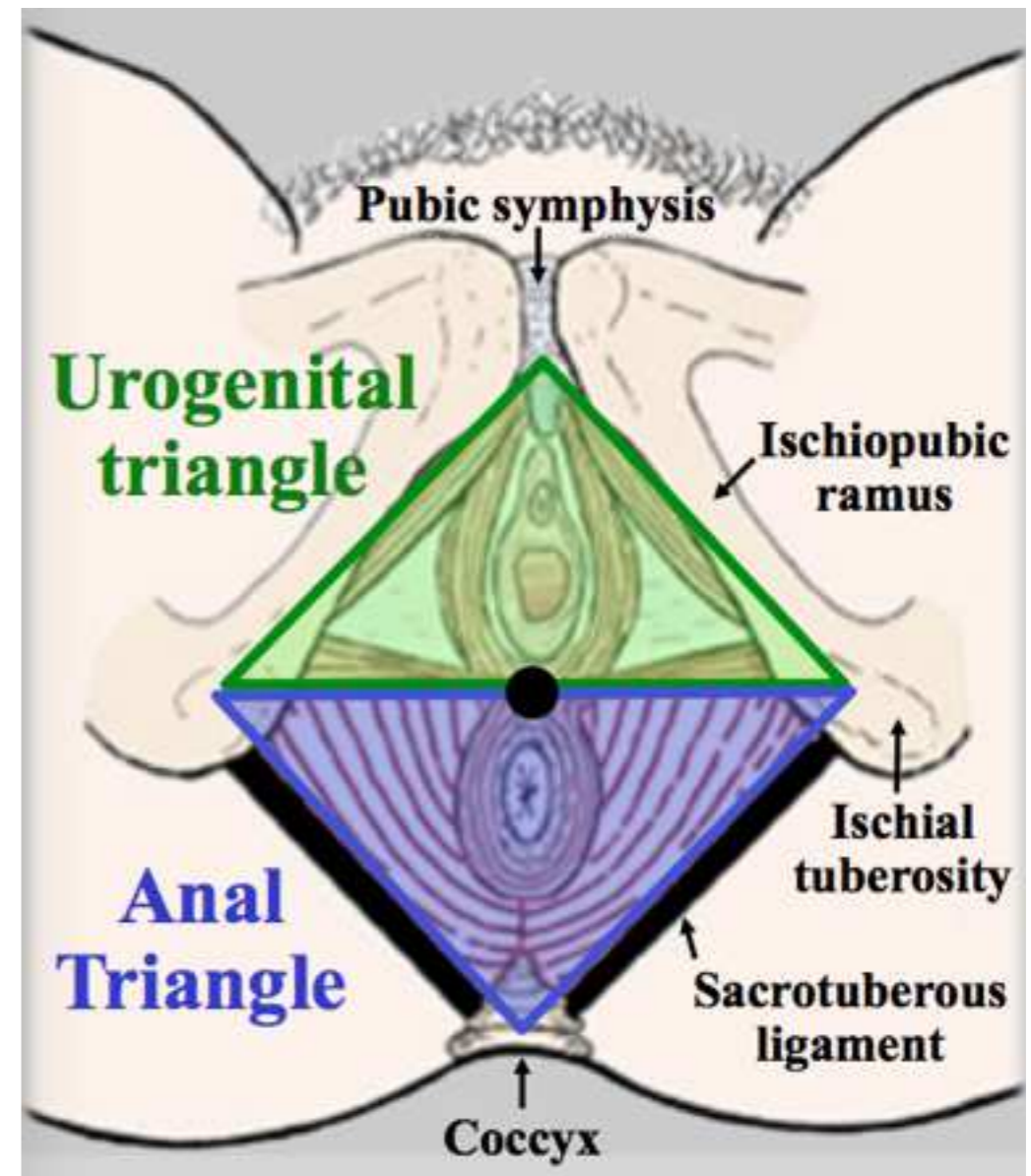
To Kegel or Not to Kegel?

Who Should Strengthen their Pelvic Floor?

- Leak urine when sneezing, coughing, running, or other activity
- Have started menopause
 - Decreased estrogen influences muscle function
- Cancer treatments that can cause 'early menopause'
 - Chemotherapy, hormone therapy, oophorectomy
- Given birth

Exercises: Strengthen Pelvic Floor

- Pretend to stop flow of urine
(feel closing around urethra)
- Hold in a tampon
(closing around vagina)
- Stop release of gas
(closing around anus)



Quickies and 'The Knack'

- Quickies
 - Try at a faster pace (2 seconds on, 2 seconds off)
- Timing
 - Practice with cough, sneeze, lift, bend over, sudden movements
 - Make contraction reflexive again

When Not to Strengthen

- Just had surgery
 - Wait at least 6-8 weeks for tissue healing
- Urinary catheter in place
- pain with sex or pelvic exam

Moisturizers

- Keep vagina moist all day
- Can be used regularly
- Effects can last up to 3 days
- 4 types:
 - Creams (Zestica Moisture)
 - Gels
 - Suppositories (Repagyn)
 - Natural oils (coconut oil)



Lubricants for Sex

- To supplement vagina's natural moisture
- Increase comfort during sex
- 3 main types:
 - Water-based (no perfumes, colouring, spermicides, or flavours)
 - Oil-based (eg. coconut oil)
 - Silicon-based



Local Estrogen

- Effective and safe for treating symptoms of menopause in *most* women
- Different forms:
 - Gels, creams, tablets, or an inserted ring
- *Currently insufficient evidence for women with ER+ breast cancer... speak to your doctor
- Compounding pharmacies best

Preventing UTIs

- Drink lots of water
- Wear cotton underwear
- No thongs
- Wipe front to back
- Empty bladder after sex
- Avoid potentially irritating feminine products
- Add cranberry juice to diet
- Avoid spermicides
- Avoid sugary foods and beverages
- Avoid chicken



Resources

Where to Find Pelvic Physiotherapists:

- Pelvic Health Solutions
www.pelvichealthsolutions.ca
- Toronto Physiotherapy
www.torontophysiotherapy.ca

Also on the Toronto Physiotherapy website:

- A copy of this talk
- Patient-centered educational material
- Rehab Science Blog: hot topics and latest research (pelvic health, cancer rehabilitation, lymphedema)

Thank You!

(Feel free to email)

For Pelvic Health Questions:

Katie Hauck, PT

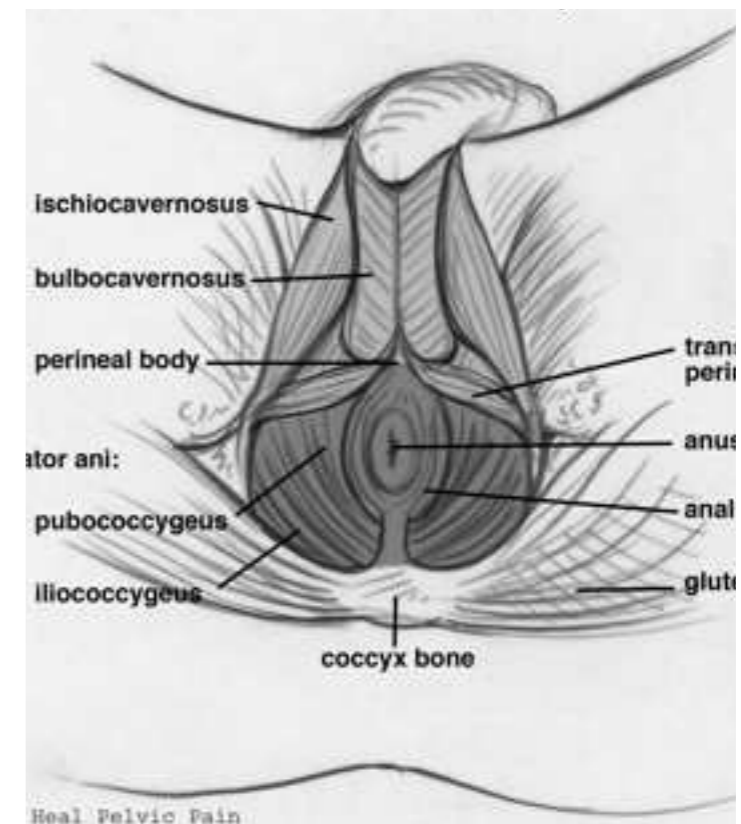
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TORONTO
PHYSIOTHERAPY

Erectile Dysfunction

- Erection involves two stages:
 - vascular phase
 - muscular phase-provides rigidity
- Rigidity achieved by contracting the ischiocavernosus muscle (first layer of the pelvic floor)
- 3 months of PFM training has positive effect
- ICM atrophy can occur with prolonged ED or after prostate surgery



How to Strengthen ICM

- Internal pelvic exam by Certified Pelvic Physiotherapist is gold standard
- How to locate:
 - Draw diagonal 'X' from sitz bone to opposite pubic bone
 - Go in, up and across
- At home tips:
 - Place finger on anal opening or ICM
 - Use a mirror

