

Urinary incontinence and vaginal prolapse are common problems, which can affect women of all ages. Most bladder and prolapse problems are due to a weakening of the pelvic floor muscles. This can be the result of pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, constipation, heavy lifting.

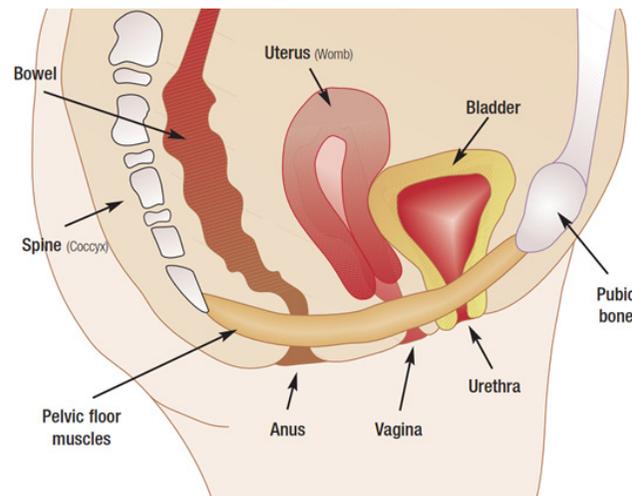
In accordance with the recommendations from the national guidelines, the first line of treatment for most women is a referral to your local Women's Health physiotherapy team.

### Why physiotherapy?

Women's Health physiotherapists are specially trained chartered physiotherapists who can assess and treat urinary and pelvic floor problems, including urinary incontinence and prolapse.

Research shows that these conditions can often be effectively treated with exercises, advice and lifestyle changes. This reduces the need for surgery and medication.

Your physiotherapist can provide you with the appropriate exercises and advice.



### The role of the pelvic floor muscles:

- To support the pelvic organs
- To reduce urinary leakage on effort or exertion, such as sneezing or coughing
- To help you to hold on when you need to pass urine
- Can help enhance sexual function.

### What happens in a physiotherapy assessment?

The female physiotherapist will assess you in a private room – they will ask questions and an internal examination may be required. This will only be done with your permission.

### Why do I need an Internal Examination?

Research shows that half of woman who are *verbally taught* pelvic floor muscle exercises are doing them incorrectly which can do more harm than good.

- If you wish a chaperone, you may request to have one when making your appointment
- Your physiotherapist will discuss your problem with you and advise you on things you should do to help your problem
- If you need further appointments, your following visits will last about 30 minutes.

## Frequently asked questions:

### **Am I too old / too late to start my pelvic floor muscle (PFM) exercises?**

It is never too early or too late to start pelvic floor exercises and they can be just as effective no matter what age you are.

### **I am doing Pilates already, why do I need physiotherapy?**

Pilates is an excellent addition to you pelvic floor muscle training. Your physiotherapist can, however, check that you are doing the pelvic floor exercises correctly and this can then be included in your Pilates.

### **My symptoms are severe - is there any point in physiotherapy?**

**Yes** - Pelvic floor exercises are very important in mild and severe cases of urinary incontinence and prolapse and would always be recommended as a first line treatment.

### **I have been to physiotherapy before and it did not work - is there any point?**

**Yes** - It may be that the exercises previously provided have not been effective enough. It is worth trying again as evidence shows, it can make a difference.

### **Is equipment to strengthen the pelvic floor necessary?**

A specialist physiotherapist can give you guidance on what may be the most suitable treatment option for you.

### **I have put up with urinary leakage for years and I am fed up. I want surgery to solve the problem quickly.**

There are no guarantees that surgery will cure your symptoms and there are always risks of complications. Evidence shows that physiotherapy offers safe treatment that may help significantly reduce your symptoms. If your symptoms are ongoing, surgical options may then be considered.

However, the stronger your muscles are before surgery, the more likely is a successful outcome.

**Physiotherapy is well recognised as an effective treatment for pelvic floor problems.**

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# Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy Information



## Physiotherapy for the treatment of urinary incontinence and prolapse