

Pelvic Floor Anatomy

If you leak pee or stool when you cough or laugh, it could be a sign of a pelvic floor problem. You may not want to talk about it. But telling your healthcare provider can help you get the treatment you need.

Your pelvic floor is a group of muscles that form a sling across the bottom of your pelvis. These muscles form the base of your core. Along with nearby tissue, they help support your pelvic organs and keep them in place.

Your pelvic organs include the: Bladder, Urethra, Intestines, and rectum. Female pelvic organs also include the: Uterus, cervix, and vagina.

Pelvic floor problems can occur when the pelvic floor muscles become weak, stretched out, injured, or too tight. Certain things can make it more likely for this to occur, such as: Pregnancy and vaginal birth; Getting older; Having a previous pelvic injury or pelvic surgery; Or straining the muscles a lot, such as when on the toilet, or from a chronic cough or heavy lifting.

When you have issues with your pelvic floor muscles, it can lead to several common health problems, such as: Bladder problems, including urine leakage, increased urgency, or frequency;

Bowel problems, including stool leakage, increased urgency, constipation, incomplete emptying, or pain with bowel movements; Pelvic pain; Pelvic organ prolapse, when an organ, like the uterus, slips down from its normal position and bulges into the vagina; Or sexual dysfunction, including pain with sexual activity or erectile dysfunction.

The good news is pelvic floor disorders can be treated. Your healthcare provider can tell you about your treatment options. They may include: Physical therapy, where you'll learn exercises to strengthen or relax your pelvic muscles; Bladder and bowel training; Lifestyle changes, such as limiting caffeine or alcohol; Devices to support your pelvic organs, like pessaries; Medicines; Or surgery.

If you have symptoms of a pelvic floor disorder, know that treatment is available. These are common medical problems, and your healthcare provider can help you find the right treatment to improve your symptoms and quality of life.