

Is Your Bladder the Most Active Thing in Your Life?



By: Christie Cohoon
St. Luke's Hospital
Physical Therapist

when pressure is exerted by coughing, sneezing, laughing or heavy lifting

- **Urge incontinence**, a sudden, intense urge to urinate, followed by an involuntary loss of urine

- **Overflow incontinence**, which is caused by an inability to fully empty the bladder

- **Functional incontinence**, usually seen in older adults caused by a physical or mental inability to make it to the toilet in time

For women who suffer from urinary incontinence, the cause can usually be traced to one of these reasons:

- **Pregnancy and childbirth** - the stress of a vaginal delivery can weaken pelvic floor muscles

- **Changes with aging** - aging can decrease the bladder's capacity

- **Cystitis** - a rare and chronic condition that is associated with inflammation of the bladder wall

- **Bladder stones or an obstruction** - urinary incontinence can be a symptom of these conditions

Risk factors that can aggravate one of these causes include obesity, smoking, vascular disease and participation in high-impact sports.

At the root of many bladder control issues is the pelvic floor - a network of muscles, ligaments and other tissues that support the pelvic organs (vagina, rectum, bladder and uterus). Pelvic

exercises can often be effective in strengthening the pelvic floor muscles, helping to keep the bladder in place.

To treat these important issues, St. Luke's has established a Pelvic Pain and Incontinence program. As a physical therapist, I see women with various types of pelvic pain, stress urinary incontinence, urge incontinence and mixed incontinence.

write their patient a prescription to come see me for this therapy.

When I first consult with a patient, I set up a personalized, individual plan that starts with a full musculoskeletal assessment. This includes posture, flexibility, core strength, spinal and pelvic alignment, among others. Each patient is always treated one-on-one in a private room designed for this therapy.

Bladder control problems can loom large in a woman's life, if not properly controlled.

Women do not need to live with this problem anymore - a simple visit to your physician is the best place to start. Any physician can

The single most important thing to remember is that there are many treatments available for you - you can be free to live your life.

It's happened to so many of us - we're laughing, coughing or lifting something and all of a sudden we're faced with an episode of bladder incontinence. As far too many women who are reading this know, bladder control problems can loom large in a woman's life, if not properly controlled. What many women might not know is there are many new ways of treating bladder control and pelvic floor issues, including medication, physical therapy and even surgery.

There are different types of incontinence, including:

-**Stress incontinence**, caused

Pelvic Floor Disorder Statistics:

More than 50 percent of women age 55 and older suffer one or more of the problems caused by pelvic floor dysfunction.

1 in 9 women will undergo surgery for a pelvic floor disorder.

Women who suffer from pelvic floor disorders underreport their condition due to embarrassment.

1 in 3 women will suffer sphincter muscle damage due to vaginal childbirth. This damage may lead to loss of bowel control.

30 percent of women with overactive bladder or urinary incontinence will also suffer from loss of bowel control.

20 percent of patients suffering from vaginal organ prolapse also experience loss of bowel control.

60 percent of nursing home occupants suffer from loss of bowel control and/or urinary incontinence.

*Source: University of Southern California Center for Colorectal and Pelvic Floor Disorders



St. Luke's HOSPITAL

Our specialty is you.

St. Luke's Hospital offers comprehensive treatment of pelvic pain and incontinence disorders. Our highly trained and compassionate therapists understand the difficulty an individual may experience while trying to manage these conditions that often affect every aspect of their lives, from their level of physical discomfort to their emotional health. We provide quality care during the evaluation and treatment of:

- Pelvic pain during and after pregnancy**
 - Pain during intercourse**
 - Interstitial cystitis**
 - Endometriosis**
- Pain after hysterectomy and other abdominal surgeries**
 - Muscle spasms**
 - Joint laxity**
 - Urinary incontinence**

Patients may obtain a prescription for this service from any physician they see. The Pelvic Pain & Incontinence program is offered by St. Luke's Therapy Services, located at the new Desloge Outpatient Center, directly across from St. Luke's Hospital on Woods Mill Road in Chesterfield. For more information, call (314)205-6185.