

FAST FACTS: PELVIC HEALTH



CROUSE
Pelvic Health Partnership

Embarrassing “accidents,” irregular periods, and uncomfortable intercourse are just some of the pelvic health perils women of all ages can experience.



Pelvic Health

Pelvic health includes the female reproductive system, the pelvis, and the pelvic floor. The female reproductive system includes the ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, cervix, and vagina. The pelvic floor is a term used to describe the muscles, ligaments, and connective tissue that provide support for the bowel, bladder, uterus, vagina, and rectum. The pelvis protects the reproductive, urinary, and digestive systems and is composed of hip bones in front and sacrum and coccyx in back.

Keep Your Perimenopause in Balance

Perimenopause, literally meaning “around menopause,” is a transition phase into menopause. During perimenopause, some subtle and some not-so-subtle changes in your body may occur. You might experience irregular menstruation, hot flashes, sleep problems, vaginal dryness, mood swings, irritability, or increased risk of depression. Because symptoms can be subtle and may come on gradually, you may not realize that they are connected.

See Your Doctor and Be Patient with Fibroids

Uterine fibroids are benign (noncancerous) growths in the muscle of the uterus. More than 75 percent of women are found to have small fibroids, but only approximately 30 percent have fibroids large enough to be discovered during a regular pelvic examination. Of these cases, about 80 percent will have no symptoms and require no treatment — just watchful waiting. Common symptoms include heavy menstrual bleeding, prolonged menstrual periods, and pelvic pressure or pain. The exact cause of fibroids is unknown. Factors that can increase your risk of fibroids include being between 25 and 35 years old, obesity, family medical history of fibroids, and being African American. Medications can be prescribed, and procedural and surgical options are available to shrink and remove fibroids.

Urinary Incontinence — Get Some Consistency Back in Your Life!

Urinary incontinence affects millions of Americans. Approximately 80 percent of those suffering from urinary incontinence can be cured or at least have their symptoms improved. Treatments can include medications to calm the bladder, which can be prescribed by your doctor, and urethral inserts and pessaries, which are small devices that are inserted to prevent urine from leaking out. There are many different

surgical options. Talk to your doctor about your treatment options as well as at-home solutions you can pair with your treatment.

Gather Your Momentum and Increase Your Sexual Response!

Increasing your sexual response is possible! Sexual dysfunction is broadly defined as the inability to fully enjoy sexual intercourse — this includes pain during sex. Health problems that may be interfering with your sex life include vaginal tissues losing lubrication and elasticity due to diminished levels of estrogen, which can make intercourse painful. Loss of tissue tone may contribute to urinary incontinence. Low estrogen levels may also leave you more vulnerable to urinary or vaginal infections. Help is available — you are never too old to enjoy a full sexual life. Talk to your doctor and discover how you can gather your momentum in the bedroom!

Be Positive About Your Body

Is vaginal reconstruction or rejuvenation right for you? There are traditional procedures available to treat vaginal conditions, including prolapse and labial hypertrophy or asymmetrical labial growth due to congenital conditions, chronic irritation, or excessive androgenic (male) hormones. The appearance of the external genitals varies significantly between women. They do not look a certain way. If you are concerned about the appearance of your vagina or that your vaginal muscles may be weak, consult your doctor, who can help you determine which treatments are right for you. Remember to stay positive about all parts of your body — every woman is unique!

DON'T believe pelvic health disorders are:

- A normal part of aging
- An inevitable consequence of childbirth
- An acceptable consequence of changes due to menopause

DO take action with your doctor to:

- Discuss your symptoms
- Know your risk factors
- Undergo any necessary tests and screenings
- Learn about your treatment options