

Pelvic Floor Dialogues

So I pee a little when I laugh. That's normal right?

How has my body changed "down there" since I had my baby?

Everyone talks about Kegels. Do they really work? How much is enough?

ISSUE 31

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Vitamin D and Urinary Urge Incontinence

Vitamin D, also known as the sunshine vitamin, is all over the news these days. Most of us are aware that our bodies need vitamin D to help keep our bones strong. But, vitamin D has lots of other jobs in our body.

Did you know that vitamin D is needed for normal muscle functioning? This role led one group of researchers to look into a link between vitamin D and [pelvic floor disorders](#) (PFDs). PFDs are a group of conditions that affect the pelvic floor. The study focused on one type of PFD, known as [urge urinary incontinence](#) (UUI). UUI is the leakage of urine along with a sudden "gotta go" NOW sensation.

Two groups of women with UUI participated in the study that evaluated if taking vitamin D supplements reduced UUI symptoms. All of the women were 50 years or older and experienced about three episodes of UUI each week. They also had low levels of vitamin D.

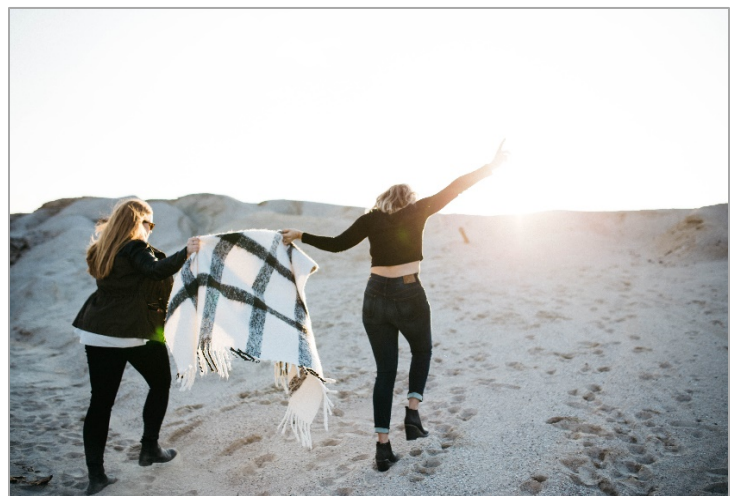
One group took vitamin D supplements. The second group did not. The women who took vitamin D had considerably less episodes of urinary leakage. And, the women in the study who were overweight and took vitamin D experienced half the number of UUI episodes.

But, for the women who did not take vitamin D, UUI episodes also decreased. Thus, though vitamin D appears to be helpful, the results are inconclusive.

The bottom line: Ask your health care provider to check your vitamin D level. If your blood test is low, talk with your provider about the potential benefits and risks of taking a vitamin D supplement. If you have UUI and a low vitamin D level, discuss the potential value of taking a vitamin D supplement to help control your symptoms.

Find out more about UUI and treatment options:

- Watch Dr. Karen Noblett discuss [urgency incontinence/overactive bladder](#) and various treatment options.
- Read more about [vitamin D](#).



Pelvic Pain, Pelvic Muscles, and Pelvic Slings

First, a few definitions:

- **Hypertonicity** has a special meaning in the world of pelvic health. It means that the muscles of your pelvic floor are too tight. The pelvic floor is the set of muscles and other tissues in the lowest part of the pelvis. It helps keep organs, such as the bladder, vagina and rectum, in place. This can cause pain and discomfort, especially with intercourse.
- **Myofascial**, despite how the word looks, has nothing to do with your face. It refers to a spider web like network of muscle tissue in the body. **Myofascial pain** is an extreme tightness of this muscle tissue. It can cause pain that resonates through the spider web. Thus, the pain can be felt in different parts of the body. Health care providers call this referred pain.

Next, some new insights about pelvic pain, pelvic muscles, and pelvic slings:

Some women with problems of the pelvic floor may experience myofascial pain in the pelvic area and pelvic organs. For example, hypertonic pelvic floor muscles may cause pain in their bladder. The pain can be debilitating.

A recent study evaluated women who had both PFDs and hypertonicity. The researchers looked for factors that might increase the risk for myofascial pain and identified three things:

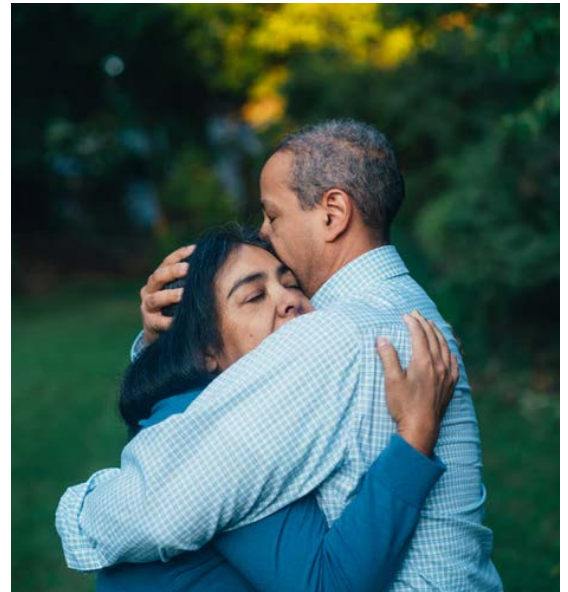
- The first factor may surprise you—it is a history of depression.
- Another factor was injury to the musculoskeletal spine.
- Lastly, women who had surgery for [urinary incontinence](#) (UI) were more likely to experience myofascial pain.

UI is the accidental leakage of urine from the bladder. Surgery may be required to treat UI. And, an interesting finding emerged for a specific [type of surgery](#)—mid-urethral sling surgery. A mid-urethral sling is a synthetic mesh placed in a strap-like fashion under the urethra to treat symptoms of UI. There are two types of mid-urethral slings: retropubic and transobturator. The names refer to how the slings are placed in the body.

A higher risk for pelvic floor hypertonicity was found among women who had transobturator sling surgery. In contrast, retropubic sling surgery was found to help prevent hypertonicity.

Most women (more than 90 percent) are happy with the outcome of mid-urethral sling surgery. Be sure to speak with your doctor about all of your PFD symptoms. This helps the surgeon make the best recommendation given your individual needs.

- Download a [free fact sheet about mid-urethral slings](#)



IC/BPS and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Three to seven percent of women struggle with interstitial cystitis, also called bladder pain syndrome (IC/BPS). IC/BPS is the presentation of bladder pain, pressure, and discomfort with urinary urgency and frequency and no sign of infection of other cause.

A subset of women with IC/BPS have experienced physical or sexual abuse. And, even after getting away from the abusive situation, some of these women struggle to recover from the abuse. The trauma stays with them and they relive the fear years and decades after the events. This is called posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Researchers looked at how many people with IC/BPS had PTSD compared with those suffering from other pain conditions. What they learned was that individuals, especially women, with IC/BPS are more likely to suffer with PTSD. If you are one of those women, get help. Speak with your health care provider. Ask for a referral to a counselor who specializes in treating women with PTSD.

- Learn more about [IC/BPS and treatment options](#)—download a free fact sheet.
- [Find a counselor who specializes in PTSD](#) in your area.

What Docs Think About YouTube Videos on Constipation

In 2015, [YouTube](#) went live. And, today, users add 300 hours of new video every minute! You can find videos on pretty much any topic, including constipation. [Constipation](#) is difficulty passing bowel movements or the need to strain for bowel movements. A group of doctors picked 20 YouTube videos about exercises for constipation. They evaluated the accuracy of the health information and scored the quality of each video.

This is what they found: Health providers **did not** post any of the videos. In fact, half of the videos were ads for products. All of the videos received a low score for overall quality. And, the level of evidence for the recommended exercises was low for many of the videos. For example, most of the videos recommended yoga for constipation relief. But, there is very little evidence supporting this link. The researchers noted that other formal reviews of YouTube videos on health topics found that the information was often of poor quality. The Voices for PFD YouTube channel offers videos from physicians, nurses, and other reliable sources:

- Watch [Dr. Dee Fenner discuss constipation](#)
- Learn about [how to assess health information on the Internet](#)



Around the Web

- [Power to the pelvis](#)
- [Rebounding and the pelvic floor](#)
- 8 things that happen inside your body [when you're constipated](#)
- [Not all vaginal implants are a problem](#) and treating them the same puts many women at risk

The Rest of the Story

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