

hollywood physical therapy associates

HEALTH WATCH

Health Watch is a quarterly publication from Hollywood Physical Therapy Associates to raise awareness of important health issues and to underscore the value of quality, personal physical therapy. With proper evaluation, a complete physical therapy program could prevent injury, promote good health maintenance and improve quality of life for certain individuals.

INCONTINENCE AND THE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

Accidental loss of urine or feces, two or more times a month is termed incontinence. **Incontinence is a common health problem facing 4 out of 10 women and 1 out of 10 men — afflicting more than 25 million people.** Many people suffering with incontinence avoid seeking treatment due to embarrassment, and resort to the use of incontinence pads or feminine hygiene pads.

Social isolation, depression, infections, hospitalizations and nursing home admissions may be the consequences of untreated incontinence. Most people believe that incontinence is a natural consequence of aging or child-bearing, so they simply buy incontinence pads and endure the associated discomfort, infections, skin irritation, and odor. **In fact, up to 80% of people suffering with incontinence can be successfully treated without surgery or medication.**

The Pelvic Floor consists of several muscles that span the bony pelvic outlet. The pelvic floor acts like a muscular diaphragm providing structural and functional support to the pelvic organs — bladder, anus and rectum. Pelvic floor muscle dysfunction contributes to a number of health problems including: urinary and fecal incontinence, urinary retention and pelvic pain.

Weak pelvic floor muscles may result in *stress incontinence*. This occurs when there is “stress” or pressure on the bladder from exertion, or an increase in intra-abdominal pressure which occurs with sneezing, coughing or laughing. One of the causes of post-urination dribble in men is stress incontinence.

Urge incontinence is the involuntary loss of urine associated with a strong urge to go to the bathroom. It is sometimes referred to as an overactive bladder. With urge incontinence, a very small amount of urine in the bladder can send a signal to the brain for the need to empty. Anything that disrupts the nerve paths carrying these messages can interfere with bladder func-

tion and cause symptoms of urgency and inability to control the leaking of urine.

Pain, depression, fear or sexual abuse, are some of the causes of *Tight (Hypertonic) pelvic floor muscles*. Under these circumstances, the patient needs to be taught how to relax the pelvic floor muscles.

Pelvic pain is as common as lower back pain and patients avoid discussing their often severe symptoms due to embarrassment. Common causes of pelvic pain are: a fall on to the back or pelvis, complicated labors/deliveries, certain diseases, injuries or surgeries, chronic fear and sexual abuse.

TREATMENT APPROACH:

Dr. Arnold Keigel, (who worked at Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital in 1948), deserves great acknowledgement for discovering that the pelvic floor muscles can be trained. In the last 55 years however, understanding of the pelvic floor has increased, resulting in a more individualized approach to treatment, with more effective outcomes.

Following a thorough evaluation, each patient receives individualized treatment to address their specific pelvic floor dysfunction. Exercises, functional training, dietary advice, relaxation and breathing techniques are common treatment methods.

Hollywood Physical Therapy Associates specialize in treating PF muscle dysfunction. It is important to receive treatment soon after noticing pelvic floor dysfunction to prevent the condition from worsening.

REFERENCES:

1. Dorothy B. Smith (2001) *Bladder Control is No Accident A Woman's Guide*. DMP Press.
2. Sapsford R, Bullock-Saxton J, Markwell S (1998) *Women's Health A Textbook for Physiotherapists*. W.B. Saunders.

Hollywood Physical Therapy Associates was founded by Mary Rosenberg in 1991 to practice a more personal approach to physical therapy. We pride ourselves on delivering professional, comprehensive care to all patients. Our caring staff, private treatment rooms and state-of-the-art facility insures patients will receive the finest care possible.

Specializing in: Lymphedema management, Aquatic physical therapy, Pilates physical therapy, treatment for incontinence, Dance and sports physical therapy, orthopaedic and neurological physical therapy.