Evaluation and Treatment

A customized exercise program is developed for each patient according to the results of the evaluation and may include:

- Patient education
- Behavior modification
- Relaxation/breathing exercises
- Exercises to retrain muscle balance
- Joint or soft tissue mobilization
- Rehabilitative ultrasound imaging
- Biofeedback
- Electrical stimulation
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the pelvic floor?
The pelvic floor is a bowl-shaped part of the body consisting of muscles and other non-muscular soft tissues located in the lower pelvis. It supports the abdominal organs, facilitates urinary and bowel continence and aids in sexual satisfaction.

How does physical therapy apply to the pelvic floor?
Normal movement and stress associated with daily living, pregnancy and age-related changes can weaken the pelvic floor. The pelvic floor is an area that can carry increased tension and stress. In the case of pelvic floor weakness or stress, individuals may experience urgency, incontinence, constipation and/or pain. Physical therapists can often help people with these symptoms by providing education, behavior modification, exercises and modalities such as biofeedback and ultrasound to facilitate normal coordination of pelvic floor muscles.

What conditions are treated?

Urgency — urinary and/or bowel
Urgency is a strong need to void (urine or stool). It occurs with little warning, and patients often have an inability to hold back urine or stool for long periods of time. Urgency can be brought on by triggers such as running water, arriving home or stress. It is commonly caused by increased muscle tone/tension in the pelvic floor.

Urge incontinence — urinary and/or bowel
Urge incontinence is the loss of stool and/or urine due to inability to control urgency. It is usually caused by increased muscle tone/tension and weakness in the pelvic floor muscles.

Stress incontinence — urinary and/or bowel
Stress incontinence is the loss of urine and/or stool that occurs with activities that increase pressure in the abdominal cavity such as coughing, sneezing, laughing, running or jumping. It can be caused by weakness and lack of coordination of the pelvic floor and abdominal muscles.

Mixed incontinence — urinary and/or bowel
Mixed incontinence is a combination of urge and stress incontinence.

Constipation
Constipation is the decreased ability to have a bowel movement. This can be caused by increased muscle tension, lack of coordination of the pelvic floor and abdominal muscles and/or poor abdominal strength.

Pelvic pain
Pelvic pain may present as pain, pressure or burning in the genitals, abdomen, tailbone, inner thigh or buttocks. It can be present while sitting, during sexual intercourse or with physical activity. Pelvic pain is often caused by increased muscle tension/spasm in the pelvic floor.

What does an evaluation include?
An evaluation may include a comprehensive history, internal pelvic floor assessment, examination of the spine and lower extremities and development of a treatment plan.

UW Health orthopedic physical therapists have advanced training and expertise in working with patients who have pelvic floor disorders. After completing a comprehensive evaluation, physical therapists create a customized program that may include patient education, exercise and biofeedback.

Is the therapy covered by insurance?
Pelvic floor physical therapy treatment is covered by most insurance carriers, however, the number of visits allowed may be limited. In most cases, a physician referral is required for reimbursement by insurance. Patients should always check with their insurance provider before starting physical therapy as prior authorization may be required.

How are appointments scheduled?
Patients should contact their physician for a referral to physical therapy. Once a referral is obtained, appointments can be scheduled at any of the following locations:

Rehabilitation Services
UW Health Princeton Club East
1726 Eagan Rd.
Madison, WI 53704
Phone: (608) 265-1221
Fax: (608) 263-2666

UW Health Research Park Clinic
Spine Physical Therapy
621 Science Dr.
Madison, WI 53711
Phone: (608) 265-3341
Fax: (608) 263-6574

UW Health Rehabilitation Clinics
6630 University Ave.
Middleton, WI 53562
Phone: (608) 263-8412
Fax: (608) 263-5011