

Alana Physiotherapy

Guide to Managing Pelvic Pain

Welcome.....

Managing pelvic pain on a day to day basis can be a daunting task. Alana Physiotherapy's **Guide to Managing Pelvic Pain** is designed to give you a better understanding of your pelvic floor anatomy, which in turn can help you improve its function.

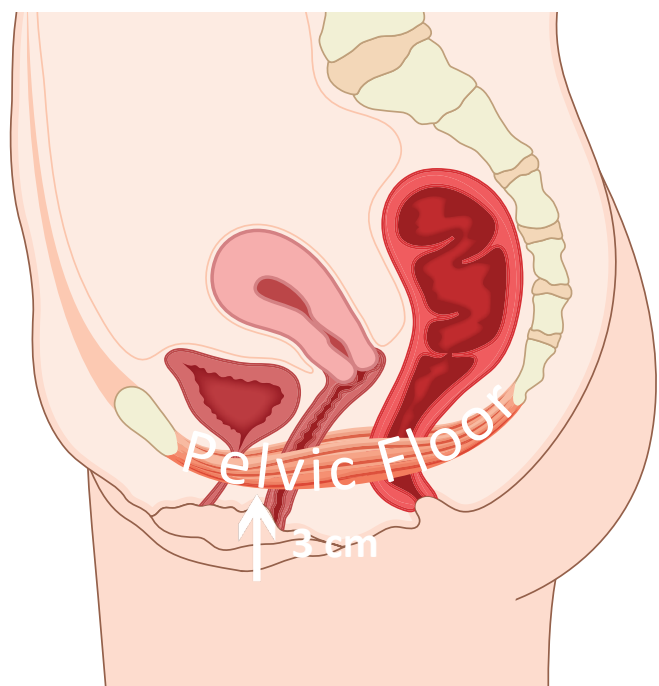
Often in cases of pelvic pain these muscles can become overactive, which can then exacerbate your symptoms. This guide focuses on how you can relax down the pelvic floor using mindfulness techniques and a simple yoga flow. Lastly, a section on correct toilet posture can help relieve the common bowel symptoms that can be associated with pelvic pain.

PELVIC FLOOR OVERACTIVITY

Your pelvic floor is an amazing set of muscles! The deep pelvic floor sits about 3 cm inside you and attaches from the pubic bone all the way back to the tailbone. You also have pelvic wall muscles that sit in front of the bladder and attach outwards onto your hip bones. When functioning well these muscles generate core strength, support our organs to prevent prolapse and stop bladder and bowel leaks. Most people understand the consequences of a weak pelvic floor, but it is common with longstanding pelvic pain that these muscles can become overactive, short and tight. Overactive pelvic floor muscles can cause the following symptoms:

- Abdominal pain
- Pain with intercourse
- Difficulty using tampons
- Hesitancy and discomfort with urination
- Back pain
- Constipation

An important part of your treatment is for you to regain control of these muscles so they can get back their full range of motion of contract, relax and gentle bulge for bowel emptying.



PELVIC FLOOR RELAXATION EXERCISES

To contract the pelvic floor you need to tighten and lift the muscle all the way from the back at the anus to the front of the vagina and bladder. If you have this guide it is most likely that you are already very good at this! Therefore your focus needs to be the downward / relaxation phase. So here is your homework:

- Each night lying down place a hand on your abdomen and start with 2 minutes of relaxed abdominal breathing (belly and ribs expand on the inhale and deflate on the exhale);
- Begin with a very small lift of the pelvic floor from anus to vagina for 1 second so that your brain can connect to the muscle;
- Then relax down, down and down again taking 5 seconds to release all the way down from belly button, to vagina and anus;
- Repeat 8 times.

Some great visualisations for this are:



1. Your pelvic floor contracts just like a claw crane vending machine. To tighten, the claw closes in around the toy then lifts up. To relax down, the claw lowers back down and then opens out fully to release the toy.



2. When you relax your pelvic floor, visualise a pebble hitting the water. It drops down, and then ripples out and open.

YOGA FLOW FOR PELVIC FLOOR OVERACTIVITY

Movement is so GOOD for pelvic pain! This sequence is designed to be able to do most days, and the focus is on breathing into the abdomen to help soften down the pelvic floor. Some focus points:

- In each *asana* (position) the focus should be on calm relaxed breaths. Don't force it. The abdomen softens and fills with air on the inhale and deflates on the exhale. Aim for 3-5 breaths in each pose.
- In down dog and deep squat imagine your two sit bones gently softening away from each other.
- With hip stretch, hamstring stretch and runners lunge try to keep the left and right sides of your pelvis level (square the hips).
- Always move into a comfortable stretch and don't push. Be kind to your body and have fun with your movement!



1. Cat



2. Cow

Alternate x10 Reps



3. Down Dog



4. Hip stretch



5. Hamstring stretch



6. Low lunge

Alternate x4 Reps



7. Down dog



8. Deep Squat

REPEAT STEPS 4-6 WITH LEFT LEG FORWARD



9. Side stretch L+R



10. Glute stretch

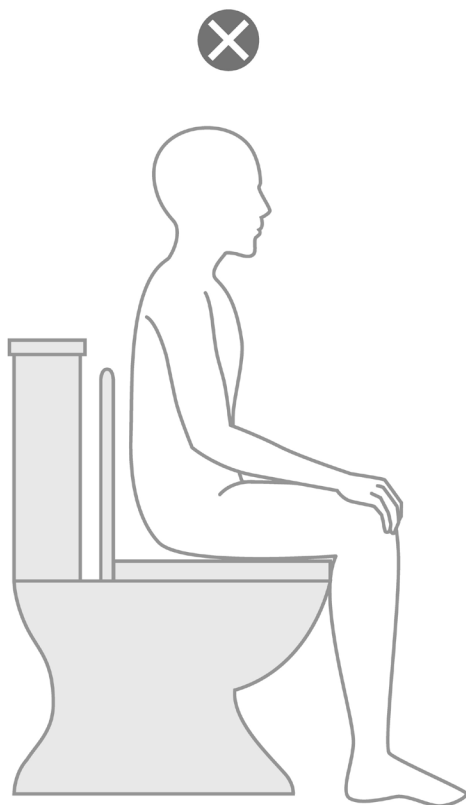


11. Supine groin stretch
with relaxed breathing

TOILET POSTURE

A common consequence of pelvic floor dysfunction is constipation, as the muscles can lack the ability to relax and gently bulge to assist defaecation. One way you can help your pelvic floor muscles to relax down and improve symptoms of constipation is to have a good toilet set-up. You should:

- Have 2 foot-stools at either side of your toilet so your knees are wide apart and higher than your hips;
- In this position lean forward with a straight spine, elbows resting out on your knees;
- Bulge your abdomen out (do not contract it in towards your spine) then gently push down for bowel motion (do not strain);
- Keep working on the co-ordination of your muscles for at least 6 weeks until it becomes your new normal.



INCORRECT



CORRECT



Ruth Schubert
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About Ruth....

Ruth is a specialist women's health and musculoskeletal physiotherapist who is passionate about pelvic health. With over 16 years clinical experience, Ruth believes that by providing the latest evidence-based and best practice physiotherapy treatment women can thrive despite the chronic pelvic conditions they may be facing.

We hope this guide encourages you to use movement as a tool for symptom management, and helps you better understand how the pelvic floor can contribute to your pain. The Alana Physiotherapy team look forward to working with you in building a healthy future.



About Alana....

At Alana, our goal is simple: To provide health care and medical expertise of the highest standard to women of any age.

Established in 2007, Alana Healthcare for Women is built around a deep understanding of the gynaecological, obstetric and fertility needs of the women of Sydney and beyond. This means we have created a team consisting of the best gynaecologists, obstetricians, fertility specialists and physiotherapists in Sydney, providing care in a way that is unique and unlike anything you've experienced before. You'll see this reflected not only in our doctors, physiotherapists and naturopaths, but also in our administrative and support team.

Your care really is our number one priority.

For more information please visit **www.alanahealthcare.com.au**.

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