



Ottawa Integrative Health Centre Inc.

1129 Carling Ave., Ottawa, ON K1Y 4G6 (613)798-1000 www.oihc.ca
New satellite office inside The Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre - 2260 Walkley Rd. Ottawa

Helping You Achieve Health . . . Naturally!

March 2015



An Introduction to Pelvic Floor Health

*By Lisa Flanders RPT,
Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist*

Optimal health of the pelvic floor is necessary for our bowel, bladder, sexual function and supporting or internal organs in both men and women. The pelvic floor is a group of muscles, which forms sling, attaching internally to the sides of the pelvis, the pubic bone, tailbone and sacrum. They support the internal organs, the abdominals and low back,

making up a bottom of the core muscles. The muscles contract to maintain continence, relax to allow urinary and fecal voiding and play a large role in sexual health, arousal and achievement of orgasm. When this group of muscles does not work symmetrically, are weak or are carrying too much tension, pelvic floor dysfunction occurs. Pelvic floor dysfunction is not a normal part of aging, nor is it a normal symptom following childbirth, it is common, but should not be normalized.

If you are a woman (or you have ever seen an episode of Sex and the City), you may have

heard of the term “Kegel Exercises” as a necessary exercise to maintain health of our pelvic floor muscles. Kegel exercises were first described in 1948 by an American gynecologist as a way to strengthen the muscles in our pelvic floor following childbirth or as we age. The truth is, contracting and tightening your pelvic floor muscles are NOT indicated for all pelvic health concerns and may do more harm than good, additionally, most people do not perform Kegel exercises correctly.

For a muscle to be functional, it must be able

Recipe Corner

Beef & Wombok Stirfry (Paleo & SCD)

1 kg rump steak
5 carrots
1 large red capsicum
1 wombok (chinese cabbage)
Coriander (stems & leaves) ½-1 cup depending on taste.
1/2 cup chicken stock (home made for SCD)
Sesame oil
½ Cup flaked almonds

Instructions:

- First, brown the flaked almonds in a fry pan over low/medium heat. Stir occasionally and remove from heat when lightly browned. Take out of frypan and set aside.
- Peel and slice carrots into matchsticks.
- Thinly slice the red capsicum.
- Wash the wombok and take off the tough outer leaves. Chop off the white, hard, core.
- Chop the wombok finely.

For the Steak

- Cook your steak as you prefer it. I cook mine 3-4 minutes each side on a grill pan on high heat. When cooked, take it off the heat, cover and allow to rest.
- Heat a frypan or wok to high heat, add 1/2 cup chicken stock and add the carrots and capsicum.
- Stir fry for about a minute.

- Add the wombok to the pan. Yes, I know it looks like way too much, but it will very quickly wilt and become much smaller. Add in the coriander as well.
- Stir after it's steamed for a while. Continue to stir until cooked.

- Drizzle about a tablespoon of sesame oil over the top.
- Slice your steak into strips and either toss through the veggies, or allow people to help themselves to veggies and then top with the steak. Finally, sprinkle some of the toasted almonds over the top.
- Serve.

to contract and relax fully, and must work well in conjunction with other muscles in our body. The pelvic floor muscles are no exception, as they must also have the ability to function with the rest of our core muscles. Think of the abdominal area as a canister, “the core” made up of a top, bottom and sides. The Diaphragm, the major breathing muscle, is found at the top sitting just below the inside of the rib cage. The abdominal muscles in the front, and the deep back muscles act to corset and support the low back. The pelvic floor at the bottom supports the canister from below. A break in the system, anywhere in the canister can lead to pelvic floor dysfunction.

Your pelvic health is nothing to be embarrassed about, but unfortunately there is still a strong stigma surrounding our private parts. Approximately 1 in 3 women and 1 in 9 men experience pelvic floor dysfunction and there are multiple causes. Pelvic floor dysfunction is not a normal part of aging, nor is it a normal symptom following childbirth, it is common, but should not be normalized. Dysfunction does not only refer to a leaky bladder, it may mean incomplete emptying of the bladder, pelvic pain or an increased number of trips to the washroom. There are many types of pelvic floors that can lead to dysfunction.

1. Hypertonic pelvic floor muscles (muscles that are too tight) can lead to;

- Urgency, urge incontinence, frequency of urination, incomplete bladder emptying or hesitancy
- Persistent Pelvic Pain, or unexplained pain in the hips, low back, genitals and rectum
- Pain during or following intercourse, pain with orgasm or arousal

2. Hypotonic pelvic floor muscles (muscles that are too weak) can lead to;

- Stress Incontinence (leaky bladder when you cough, sneeze, laugh or jump), urge incontinence
- Pelvic organ prolapse

3. Asymmetric Pelvic Floors, with tension on one side and weakness on the other, which may contribute to any of the concerns listed above.

Many people are disconnected to their pelvic floors, as this is an area often ignored. Pelvic floor physiotherapy is not about teaching you how to do a Kegel, it's about connecting you with the pelvic floor and taking back control of your bladder, bowel, sexual health and your life. Treatment for your pelvic health concern starts with a thorough history taking and physical exam. From there, the concern you have addressed is discussed and a treatment process is described to you.

Start connecting to your pelvic floor today. Start by lying on your back, or in a comfortable position. Place one hand just below your ribcage and the other just above your pubic bone. Focus on the areas under your hands. Breathe slowing and deeply in through your nose and feel both hands slightly rise. Focus on having the belly expand rather than the chest. Imagine the air filling your lungs, going down into belly and feel it all the way down into your pelvic floor. See if you can feel the muscles relaxing. Take a long slow exhale through your mouth, form your lips as if you are whistling to slow the exhalation even further. Start with 10 breaths in and out. If you do not feel the connection and the muscles relaxing right away, do not get frustrated, it may take some practice to start connecting again. Keep practicing until you feel the muscles relax on the top of the inhalation

Know that each pelvic health concern is as unique as the individual that is experiencing it and each treatment plan will be tailored specifically for that person. Do not be embarrassed about seeking treatment. Take back control of your pelvic floor and take back your life.

For more information or to make an appointment please call:

(613) 798-1000 or email: info@oihc.ca or visit our website at: www.oihc.ca