

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?

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The Ultimate, One Stop Site for Women with PFDs

When was the last time you visited www.voicesforpfd.org? If it has been awhile, you are in for a great surprise. The site has been fully redesigned—and updated content added:

- [Ask a PFD expert](#) those unanswered questions
- Download new [fact sheets](#)
- [Watch videos](#) with experts
- Read [patient stories](#)

So, what are you waiting for? Check out www.voicesforpfd.org today. Visit the ultimate, one-stop site for women with pelvic floor disorders (PFDs), conditions that affect the muscles of the bottom of the pelvis (called the pelvic floor). There's lots of valuable information and resources on pelvic organ prolapse ([POP](#)), [urinary leakage](#), and [bowel control](#) difficulties.

American Urogynecologic Society
1100 Wayne Ave, Suite 670 | Silver Spring, MD 20910

P: 301.273.0570 | F: 301.273.0778 | info@aug.s.org
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Leg Shimmy, Body Shimmy, Pelvic Tilt: Belly Dancing Exercises the Pelvic Floor Muscles

In a South Korean city, 12 middle-aged women swayed and thrusted to Middle Eastern music. These belly dancers were not just shimmying their bodies, they were also strengthening their pelvic floor muscles. [Urinary incontinence](#), or the accidental leakage of urine, brought them together. The women volunteered to participate in a study evaluating the impact of belly dancing on the pelvic floor. And, after 12 weeks of performing a specially-designed 90-minute belly dance program twice a week, their pelvic floor muscles were stronger. The shimmying also resulted in fewer episodes of urinary frequency (urinating eight or more times per day). Plus, they experienced less nocturia (the need to urinate one or more times during sleeping hours).

So, do only specially-designed belly dancing moves [strengthen the pelvic floor](#)? We dug deeper and found a case study about a belly dancer experiencing continual sexual arousal. It turns out that her pelvic floor muscles had become extremely tight. The cause was overdoing those shimmies and hip thrusts. Thus, traditional belly dancing appears to help strengthen the pelvic muscles, too. So, get out there girls—leg shimmy, hip circle, belly roll, figure eight, choo choo-shimmy.

- For more about pelvic floor muscle exercises, check out Nurse Leah Moynihan's YouTube video on [How to do a Kegel Exercise](#).
- Remind yourself to do your pelvic floor muscle exercises: Download the [Kegel Exercises Instruction Sheet](#) and post it on the back of your bathroom or closet door

And, Yoga's Child Pose May Ease Your Chronic Pelvic Pain

Yoga therapy is an emerging treatment for chronic pain conditions. It is different from standard yoga classes. Therapists blend restorative and gentle yoga moves, targeting the location of the pain. Guided meditation and breathwork may also be included. A group of clinicians wondered if yoga therapy might help their patients with chronic pelvic pain (CPP). They designed a program for women who had been living with moderate to severe CPP for six months or longer. Sixteen women attended the 6-week, twice weekly yoga therapy program. They also practiced yoga at home for at least one hour per week during that time. At the end of the study, all the women noted that their pain was less severe. Plus, their mood, sexual function, and overall well-being improved during those six weeks.

Thinking about becoming a yogini? Read on, there are a few caveats. First, the number of participants in this study was very small. To learn if yoga therapy is helpful for most women with CPP, it must be tested with a larger group. Also, a specific type of yoga was used called Iyengar. Do a quick [Wikipedia](#) search and you learn that this is a form of Hatha Yoga, which emphasizes detail, precision, alignment, and breath control. Thus, we do not know if the study results apply to other yoga disciplines. On the flip side, another group of researchers gave yoga therapy for CPP a thumbs-up. Their study included 60 women between the ages of 18 to 45 years. After an 8-week period, the women reported both reduced CPP and improved quality of life. The bottom line: Though the jury is still out, the value of yoga therapy for CPP looks promising.

- [Find a yoga therapist](#) in your area
- See EMH Physical Therapy of NYC's suggested [Top 5 Exercises for Pelvic Pain](#)



Photo by Petr Kratochvil

What's "Hand Grip Strength" Got to do It?

Shake the hand of a 70-year-old woman with [stress urinary incontinence](#) (SUI) and you gain insight into the severity of her urinary symptoms. SUI is urine leakage with physical activity such as laughing, sneezing, lifting, or exercise. Researchers recently reported on a link between declining hand grip strength and increasing SUI episodes. Indeed, hand grip strength is reflective of an overall loss of muscle mass. And, as we age, just like other muscles, the pelvic floor muscles weaken.

What can you do about it? Beef up with simple strength building exercises—work your hands, arms, core and pelvic floor. Increased muscle mass may prevent your SUI symptoms from getting worse. And, if you do not have SUI, strength training may prevent you from developing this type of incontinence.

- Take the [Bladder Control Quiz](#): If you answer yes to one or more questions, share the results with your health care provider
- Learn how to [test your hand grip strength](#)
- And, [improve your strength](#) with these easy, home exercises from the National Institute on Aging



OAB Affecting your Psyche? Is it the Condition or the Treatment?

Overactive bladder (OAB) can be a real downer. The urinary urgency, usually with frequency and nocturia, and sometimes with urgency urinary incontinence, interferes with many daily activities. OAB even forces some women to retreat from life. Good news—there are effective treatments. Not-so-good news—two common OAB medicines may negatively affect your psyche. Known as antimuscarinics and anticholinergics, these meds help prevent bladder spasms. Antimuscarinics may also increase your risk for depression. The risk is nearly 40 percent after three years on these drugs. And, anticholinergics have been linked to a greater risk for dementia among seniors. In one study, after 1 year, dementia affected 80 percent of women on these meds. In contrast, only 35% of those not on the drugs were experiencing such cognitive declines.

What's the takeaway? Ask your health care provider about the potential side effects of OAB drugs. Weigh the pros and cons with your provider. And, monitor yourself. Not all women experience these side effects. However, if you are unusually blue or find that your memory is failing, alert your provider. An alternative [therapy](#) may be a better option for you.

- Watch Dr. Karen Noblett discuss [urgency incontinence OAB](#)
- And, download FREE resources: [OAB Fact Sheet](#) and the [OAB Life Impact Tracker](#)

Around the Web

- [Results of two studies refute transvaginal mesh as causing autoimmune disease and cancer](#)
- [Advice from Harvard Medical School on what to do about pelvic prolapse](#)
- [Constipated? Gut doctors share 4 fixes for belly bloat](#)

- [Artificial intelligence: Coming soon to a hospital near you](#)
 - [Prevent pelvic pain with pre-pregnancy exercise: Study](#)
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The Rest of the Story

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