

# 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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## New Year, New You

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### Bladder Health Week Recap



Many UROGYNs and other doctors hosted seminars on pelvic floor disorders (PFD) across the country during Bladder Health Week, November 9-13, 2015. AUGS, the PFD Alliance and other groups were behind the more than 80 "Break Free from PFDs" local events. The 1,500+ attendees learned how to evaluate their own pelvic health. They also got tips on discussing pelvic health concerns with their doctor. Thanks to everyone who participated in these community talks!

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## Lose Weight—Hmm, Bariatric Surgery?

Losing weight is a popular New Year's Resolution, especially after holiday splurges. For women, excess weight—in particular those pounds that collect around our midsections—applies pressure on our pelvic floor organs. This can lead to urinary incontinence (UI), or unintentional leakage of urine. Some overweight women also experience accidental bowel leakage (ABL). ABL is the loss of normal control of the bowels, leading to release of solid or liquid stool or gas. Doctors thus suggest that women with unhealthy body weights trim down. And, a group of researchers wondered if weight loss due to bariatric surgery might also control UI and ABL. Results varied for these two types of incontinence. Weight loss due to bariatric surgery improved UI symptoms. In fact, about half of the women no longer had UI after their weight loss. Participants reported better quality of life, including sexual health. Weight loss related to bariatric surgery among women with ABL, however, did not improve symptoms. Many of the women actually noted increased episodes of gas. Women with both ABL and UI, noted fewer episodes of UI after weight loss due to bariatric surgery.

## Eat Better—Might Probiotics Help my PFD?



Probiotics were a hot topic in 2015. They became a trendy holistic therapy for many health problems, including constipation. It turns out that the guts of people with chronic constipation are lower in two microbes—lactobacillus and bifidobacterium. But, before stocking up, researchers suggest caution. Why the hesitation? Manufacturers are still figuring out how to keep these live organisms thriving and viable. And, scientists continue to explore how specific microbes or combinations of these bugs affect the guts of humans. The take home message: Ask your doctor if probiotics might be helpful for you.

## Exercise My Pelvic Floor—Pilates Moves from “Down Under” for “Down There”

Pilates is becoming even more popular. By the spring of 2015, 25+ million people in the US practiced this system of exercises designed to improve physical strength, flexibility, posture, and mental awareness. Pilates lovers often note how it really builds the core muscles. Sounds wonderful, right? Well, maybe not, if your pelvic floor muscles are weak. Did you know that some Pilates' moves can irritate your PFD? Check out this Australian website featuring Pilates for women with PFD. Learn how to modify Pilates' routines to make them safer for your pelvic floor. And, don't forget about those Kegels.

## Mind My Pain—With Mindfulness Meditation

In 2015, General Mills, Google, and Target offered mindfulness meditation classes for staff. They wanted to see if this activity optimized work performance. Mindfulness meditation involves quieting those nonstop thoughts that continually ping in our brains. It challenges us to step back and observe these sensations without acting upon them. By doing this, we can learn that many of these thoughts and feelings are short-lived and fleeting. This can help us to ignore pain, pass on dessert, or let anger subside. Fifty chronic pain patients agreed to practice mindfulness meditation. After one year, researchers noted each of the participants were less depressed and anxious. Indeed, mindfulness meditation activates the region of the brain that controls pain sensations. Thus, it appears to be a helpful complementary pain therapy for many people.

## Quit Smoking—It’s Killing My Vaginal Flora

Microbial flora “blossomed” as a topic of interest in 2015. There were many stories about how changes in these “good bugs” may lead to various diseases. Researchers found, for example, that smoking cigarettes changes vaginal flora. Vaginal flora are the variety of bacteria that normally grow in our vaginas. Findings of studies showed that changes in vaginal flora related to smoking put a woman at a higher risk for severe pelvic organ prolapse (POP). POP is the dropping of the pelvic organs caused by the loss of normal support of the vagina. Smoking cigarettes also produced changes in vaginal flora that increased the chance for developing bacterial vaginosis, an overgrowth of vaginal bacteria. Bacterial vaginosis, or BV, is the most common vaginal infection in reproductive age women. Plus, smoking reduces levels of estrogen, which helps keep the vagina healthy and stocked with good bugs. So, here’s another reason to quit: Smoking is not good for your vaginal flora!



## The Rest of the Story

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