

# 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?

ISSUE 3

## Pelvic Floor Dialogues

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### Are You One of the Five?



A review of health insurance records emphasized the importance of continuing to raise awareness about pelvic health. Women with stress urinary incontinence (SUI) or pelvic organ prolapse (POP) had a 20 percent lifetime risk of surgery. "This means that one out of every five women in the United States will undergo a urogynecologic procedure by the age of 80," Dr. Jennifer M. Wu said at the AUGS 34th Annual Scientific Meeting, per a quote in OBGYN News. "This high rate highlights the public health burden of pelvic floor disorders (PFD), exposes the need for improved prevention strategies, and underscores the importance of effective long-term surgical interventions." Watch a video of this interview with Dr. Wu.

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## Were You One of the 1,200?

More than 1,200 women attended 58 events in celebration of Bladder Health Week, a national health advocacy week, held annually in the US the second full week in November. November 11-15, 2013, AUGS members hosted free programs around the county, encouraging women to talk about and seek treatment for PFDs.

**“Good information to share with other women and encouraged to know all the help available.”**

These community programs are part of the "Break Free from PFDs" campaign, which is helping women understand the facts about PFDs and empowering them with information on how to pursue individualized solutions for improved quality of life. Knowledge is power and when it comes to PFDs, knowledge increases awareness, decreases stigma, and encourages women to explore treatment options with their doctors. To ensure you receive updates on events and activities:

- Create a profile on [voicesforpfd.org](http://voicesforpfd.org).
- Prefer not to go alone? Pass this newsletter along to your girlfriends, encourage them to subscribe to PFD Dialogues and create a profile on [voicesforpfd.org](http://voicesforpfd.org).

## PFD Awareness Needed, Especially Among Women of Color

Did you know that about 25% of women 20 years or older suffer with PFDs? Researchers from the Yale School of Medicine found that these women struggle with one or more of the three most common PFDs—urinary incontinence (UI), fecal incontinence, and POP. Compared with other women, those with POP were more knowledgeable about their condition. Women with UI, however, were less knowledgeable than others. Plus, most of these women had not yet received treatment for UI.

Of the 431 women in the study, aged 19 to 98 years:

- 71% lacked knowledge about UI.
- 48% lacked knowledge about POP. “Good information to share with other women and encouraged to know all the help available.” Break Free from PFDs program participant
- African-American women and the combined group of Hispanic, Asian, and other non-white women possessed significantly less knowledge about PFDs.

Campaigns, such as Break Free from PFDs, help raise awareness and provide helpful resources. So, whether you are 19 years or 98 or somewhere in between, check out the many printable resources available to you, including information on preparing for your first visit to a urogynecologist.

## Does a Healthy Pelvis = A Healthy Sex Life?

Thanks to 313 German women, clinicians understand more about the link between urogynecological health and sexuality. About three quarters (73%) of women without PFDs shared they were sexually active. Women with pelvic floor conditions, in contrast, were less sexually active. And those with SUI and mixed-incontinence more often experienced episodes of incontinence with penetration.

### Pelvic Floor Disorder Women with Active Sex Lives

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| SUI                | 68% |
| Mixed Incontinence | 48% |
| OAB                | 56% |
| POP                | 55% |

The take away? If a PFD is affecting your sex life, you are not alone. Talk with your doctor. Ask about treatment options.

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## Vitamin D May Play a Role in PFDs

Vitamin D helps build strong muscles and keeps your muscles working well. On the flipside, if your body is low on the “sunshine” vitamin, your muscles may weaken, including those pelvic floor muscles. And, weak pelvic floor muscles contribute to PFDs such as UI and fecal incontinence. Recently, clinicians observed a link between lack of vitamin D and severity of PFDs. Though more research is needed, adding vitamin D to your PFD treatment plan may help boost those pelvic floor muscles and quality of life. This offers hope for women, especially given that the risk for both PFDs and vitamin D deficiencies increase with age.

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## The Rest of the Story

Want to read the original research? Check out the following sources:

- Wu JM, Matthews CA, Jonsson Funk M. Lifetime risk of surgery for stress incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse. American Urogynecologic Society 34th Annual Scientific Meeting, Las Vegas, NV, October 16-19, 2013.
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