

This leaflet is to provide you with information about an assessment by a female Specialist Pelvic Health Physiotherapist.

What do we do?

Treatment of incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse and pelvic pain including:

- Pelvic Floor Muscle Training (using Kegel exercises, EMG biofeedback, muscle stimulation).
- Advice on the use of other devices and vaginal inserts.
- Manual therapy for overactive or painful pelvic floor muscles.
- Bladder Training for overactive bladder syndrome.
- Safe rehabilitation following pelvic floor surgery or hysterectomy.
- Advice on pelvic and vaginal health

This leaflet is intended to answer any questions you may have regarding vaginal/rectal examinations and pelvic floor assessments. It is not intended to replace any discussion with your physiotherapist.

What does the assessment involve?

An assessment starts with an interview to find out more information about your general health and more specifically

about your bladder, bowel and pelvic function.

Following this, a physical examination is carried out; this is commonly a vaginal examination.

Why does a physiotherapist need to perform a vaginal/rectal examination?

An internal vaginal/rectal examination is performed by a specially trained Chartered Physiotherapist to assess the strength of the pelvic floor muscle.

Treatment often includes exercises for this muscle to improve your symptoms. Following an internal examination, the physiotherapist is able to design an individual exercise programme suitable for you.

What is involved?

You will be in a private treatment room with a closed door. You will be asked to remove your lower underwear, lie on a bed, on your back, with your knees bent. You will be given a sheet to put over your lap.

As part of the examination, the physiotherapist will insert a lubricated gloved finger into your vagina or back passage to assess the strength of your muscles.

You will be asked to perform a series of pelvic floor exercises to assess your muscle function further.

Throughout the examination the physiotherapist will discuss what she is doing and what she wants you to do.

What are the risks of an internal examination?

Although this procedure carries very little risk when performed with correct infection control procedures, there are certain conditions/situations which are listed as precautions under national guidelines. You must therefore inform your physiotherapist if any of the following apply:

- You may be pregnant
- You have had a baby recently or have had recent pelvic surgery
- You currently have any vaginal infection
- You have recently received radiotherapy
- You have an allergy to latex
- Your cultural/religious beliefs do not allow this type of examination
- If you have ever seen your doctor with a complaint of pelvic pain or other problems around the pelvic area
- You are menstruating
- Psychosexual problems

Chaperone

You have the opportunity to bring or have a chaperone with you during the examination. Please inform your physiotherapist if this is required.

We can provide a formal chaperone (another member of staff) or you can bring a relative or friend that can act as an informal chaperone. If no chaperone is available you will be given the opportunity to reschedule your appointment.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this examination please speak to your physiotherapist who will be happy to discuss any issues with you.

Can you refuse to have the internal examination?

It is understandable that some people may not want to be examined. Your consent to the examination is needed. Your therapist will be able to answer any questions or concerns you have. You will also have the right to stop the examination at any point.

Will not having the examination make any difference to the treatment?

When an exercise programme is based on the findings of the internal examination, the treatment is more effective.

However, the physiotherapist will still continue to give you the advice you need and encourage you to do your exercises, suggesting alternative ways to assess your technique.

Useful contact

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact the

Physiotherapy Department on

 **Tel: (01803) 655340**

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

PATIENT INFORMATION

What To Expect When You Visit A Bladder, Bowel And Pelvic Physiotherapist