

Pelvic Pain

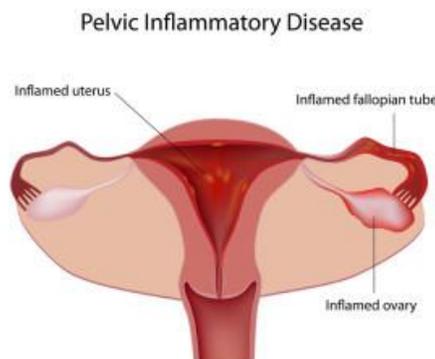
The region of the body located beneath the abdomen is known as the pelvis. This area is subject to chronic pain, especially in women. Chronic female medical issues and other disorders can lead to pelvic pain.

According to the National Pain Foundation, nearly 20 percent of women suffer from some form of pelvic pain, whether mild to chronic. There are between 20 and 30 million women in the United States alone who suffer from this painful condition. While the reasons for pelvic pain vary, one thing is common among cases – the pain.



What Causes Chronic Pelvic Pain in Women?

Chronic pelvic pain conditions generally last for more than six weeks, can be recurrent with episodes of remission, or gradually worsen with time. Pain conditions, no matter where they occur on the body, should be assessed by a pain clinic in order to identify the cause for the pelvic pain.



Women face a number of gynecological conditions that may result in chronic pelvic pain, especially if the conditions are left untreated. Some of the most common chronic pelvic pain causes include:

- **Endometriosis** – A condition where the tissue from the lining of the uterus grows on the outside of the organ and surrounding areas. The lining may thicken and cause hormonal levels to get out of balance. Painful cysts may develop inside the abdomen and pelvic region.
- **Chronic pelvic inflammatory disease** – Long-term infections can cause scarring in the pelvic region and on the organs found in this area. Painful episodes that are chronic in nature can be caused by pelvic inflammatory disease and should be treated.
- **Issues following pelvic** surgeries – Procedures and surgeries in the pelvic region may cause scarring and pain. More and more reports of women who have had chronic pain following hysterectomies are being recorded and the statistics are increasing in number.
- **Fibroid development** – Fibroids are noncancerous tumors that develop in the uterus and require surgery to remove them. They can be extremely painful with and without surgery. Pain treatment is often required to curb the symptoms during the healing process.
- **Pelvic muscle tension** – This syndrome involves spasms and extreme tension in the pelvic region muscles, resulting in significant pain. Pain management is required to help women cope with pelvic tension. If not managed, the pain can cause difficulty with urination, sexual intercourse and other problems.

What Kinds of Treatment Are Available for Pelvic Pain?

Working with a pain clinic to identify the cause of the pelvic pain is helpful in treating the condition properly and effectively. There are times when the cause for pelvic pain cannot be determined, or it can be determined and surgery is an elective last resort. When this is the case, management of the pain is needed.

Medication Management

A variety of medications may be needed to treat pelvic pain, depending on the cause or length of time the condition has impacted the patient. Pain relievers, antibiotics, antidepressants, hormone treatments, and other medications may be needed depending on what is found aberrant.

A combination of medications may be required, as well as a combination of therapies in order to combat the condition and reduce painful symptoms associated with chronic pelvic pain.

Physical Therapy

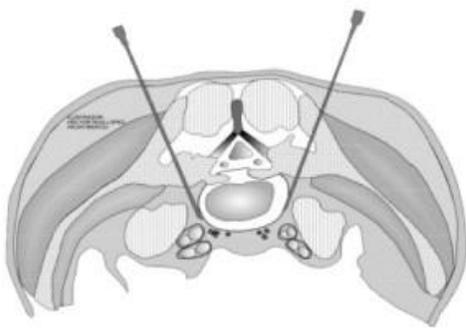
Cold and heat applications to the abdomen, along with stretching exercises and ultrasound have yielded favorable results in the reduction of pain for patients.

Chronic pelvic pain may improve by massage treatment, practicing relaxation techniques and strengthening the pelvic floor muscles. Coping strategies are needed if you have suffered from pelvic pain for prolonged periods of time.



Pain Management Injections

There are a few injection techniques which have shown success in treating pelvic pain.



Superior Hypogastric Plexus Blocks help 70% of the time with pelvic pain.

Superior hypogastric plexus nerve blocks have shown success in 70% of patients. They typically relieve, on average, 50% of pain and decrease narcotic needs by 40% for over a month at a time (de Leon-Casasola et al, Pain 1992).

Ilioinguinal nerve blocks may also help in situations where it is deemed that anatomy is contributing to pelvic pain.

Spinal Cord Stimulator Treatment

Spinal cord stimulation is another technique used to treat chronic pelvic pain as a last resort. This procedure involves the insertion of tiny electrodes near the spinal cord that release electrical impulses designed to reduce pain in the lower spine and pelvic region. Results have been favorable and patients have enjoyed decreased pain and relief from other symptoms (Chaitow et al., *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, 2005).

Thirty percent of the time, women with pelvic pain have already undergone a hysterectomy. If no clear cause of pelvic pain can be seen that can be helped with surgery, a spinal cord stimulator may represent an excellent last resort procedure.

Alternative Therapies

Chiropractic treatments have shown promising results for people with pelvic pain. Conservative manipulation may help relieve pain and symptoms associated with pelvic conditions. Although the

treatment is conservative in nature, favorable results have been reported from this form of treatment.

Acupuncture is another alternative therapy that is being closely looked at as a favorable alternative for the treatment of pelvic pain. The insertion of tiny needles into trigger points can help release natural healing hormones in the body, causing a decrease in pain and tenderness (Gambone et al., *American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation*, 2005).

Combination treatment is often needed to manage chronic pain of the pelvis. Your pain management doctor will design a conservative treatment plan that may consist of several forms of treatment. Some patients may respond well to medication and physical therapy, while others may require varied forms of treatment.