

Midlife Matters March 8, 2016, The Pelvic Floor Pathway, Maggie Phelan RN (NP)

The Pelvic Floor Pathway is a program created to help women who have urine leakage due to urinary incontinence (reduced muscle control) and pelvic organ prolapse (shifting of organs in the pelvis) to access help and treatment for their condition. Once referred to the program, women will attend a group education session, either in person or via Telehealth at their local health care facility. After attending the class, women can make an appointment with the Nurse Practitioner for an assessment and to develop a management plan.

Women can also have pelvic floor physiotherapy at our Pelvic Floor Pathway Clinic. It is staffed by specially trained Nurse Practitioners and Physiotherapists who implement individual management plans approved by specialists.

Urinary incontinence (leaking urine when you don't want to) is a common condition that affects more than 30 % of adult women. There are two main types of urinary incontinence, stress incontinence and urge incontinence.

- Stress incontinence occurs when pressure is placed on the bladder. People may leak with coughing, laughing, sneezing, bending, jumping, and exercising. This can happen when our pelvic floor muscles are weakened by having babies, with chronic constipation, obesity, or simply getting old.
- Urge incontinence is when you leak urine on the way to the toilet. This can occur with little or no warning. Triggers may be associated with urge incontinence can include hearing water run, getting a chill, arriving home, or standing from a chair or bed. With urge incontinence, the problem is an overactive bladder muscle. People may also experience frequency, a need to urinate often either in the day or night.

A vaginal prolapse (also called a pelvic organ prolapse) can happen when the muscles in the pelvis become weak allowing the bladder, uterus, or bowel to come down. The main symptom is a bulge in your vagina or between your legs. Women can also have lower back or abdominal pressure or heaviness. Although this can occur in any woman, prolapse is often caused by having babies, obesity, and aging. Constipation, chronic cough and heavy lifting may contribute to its cause.

There are many treatment options to improve or cure these conditions and can include:

- Reducing bladder irritants such as caffeine, nicotine, aspartame, citrus, spicy foods, and vinegar
- Achieving a healthy weight
- Avoiding constipation
- Strengthening the pelvic floor muscles
- A pessary (a device inserted to support the uterus)
- Medications
- Surgery

Your primary healthcare provider can refer you to the Pelvic Floor Pathway Clinic, located at the Women's Health Centre at Saskatoon City Hospital. If you are just interested in attending the class, you are welcome to do so without a referral. Contact the Pelvic Floor Pathway in Saskatoon at 306-655-7901 or in Regina at 306-766-0401.

For more information, here is our website:

<http://www.sasksurgery.ca/patient/pelvicfloor.html>