



Pelvic Pain

Sources and Treatment Options

Causes of Pelvic Pain

Pelvic pain is a significant problem for women of all ages. It can come on suddenly or last for months.

This pain occurs below the belly button (lower part of the abdomen) and can be severe enough to impact the quality of life, work, and intimacy.

Causes of Pelvic Pain

Sources of pain include:

- Gynecologic (tubes, ovaries, and uterus)
- Urologic (bladder)
- Gastrointestinal (bowels - IBS, constipation, etc...)
- Neurologic (pain syndromes, trauma)
- Musculoskeletal (muscles, ligaments, and bones)
- Psychological (physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; anxiety and/or depression)

Causes of Pelvic Pain

These causes can be hard to identify and there may be more than one. Given this, a thorough history and physical exam is required.

In addition, a pelvic ultrasound and/or surgery to look at the pelvis are often necessary.

Endometriosis

One common cause of pain in women of reproductive age is endometriosis.

Endometriosis is a condition where the lining of the uterus (the endometrium) is located outside of the uterus, typically in the pelvis or abdomen.

This can occur in up to 10-15% of women, and when it happens, can cause pelvic pain, painful periods, pain with intimacy, and infertility.

Endometriosis

Diagnosis is often based on a woman's history, but a certain diagnosis is made by surgical evaluation (laparoscopy) and biopsy.

Endometriosis can be treated with medicines such as non-steroidal pain medicines, birth control pills, as well as other forms of hormone therapy.

Sometimes surgery is needed to adequately treat this condition.

Treatment Options

After your doctor makes a diagnosis, a treatment plan can be established.

The following pages are just a few possibilities given the complexity and nature of pelvic pain.

Treatment Options: Medications

Medications

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDS) like Ibuprofen or Naproxen
- Hormones (such as include birth control pills, progesterone, etc.)
- The Mirena Intrauterine Device
- Antidepressants (Amitriptyline, Zoloft, Effexor, etc.)
- Neurologic modulators (gabapentin – Neurontin)
- and many others.

Treatment Options: Therapy

Therapy

This may include pelvic floor physical therapy to help in muscle relaxation or psychological counseling to explore and deal with any history of abuse that may be contributing to pain.

Treatment Options: Surgery

Surgery

This may include a diagnostic scope to look inside the abdomen and pelvis for causes of pain or a hysterectomy depending on your age and desire to have children.

Hysterectomy for pelvic pain is an option - but a small percentage of women they continue to have pain after surgery.

A hysterectomy is the surgical removal of all or part of the uterus, or “womb.”

There are several ways this can be performed...

Treatment Options: Surgery

A supracervical hysterectomy removes the uterus but leaves the cervix in place, which some research suggests may reduce the risk of pelvic organ prolapse, and preserve sexual function.

This is sometimes referred to as a “partial hysterectomy.”

Treatment Options: Surgery

Total or “traditional” hysterectomy removes all of the uterus and cervix.

A radical hysterectomy may remove all of these organs (the uterus, cervix, fallopian tubes, ovaries), plus the pelvic lymph nodes.

Treatment Options: Surgery

There are three major ways to perform a hysterectomy...

Treatment Options: Surgery

Abdominal – also referred to as “open”

This hysterectomy method requires a 4- to 8-inch incision just above the pubic hair line to remove the uterus and cervix and, in some cases, other organs (tubes and/or ovaries).

The most invasive kind of hysterectomy, this type is performed under general anesthesia, with a typical hospital stay of 3-6 days and up to 6 weeks of recovery time.

Treatment Options: Surgery

Vaginal

This hysterectomy method uses a smaller incision inside the vagina to remove the uterus, cervix and other organs, as determined by your doctor.

This incision is not visible externally.

A vaginal hysterectomy usually requires a 1-3 day hospital stay and up to 4 weeks recovery time.

Treatment Options: Surgery

Laparoscopic

This has become one of the more popular hysterectomy approaches.

With this method, a thin, lighted, telescope- like instrument called a laparoscope (along with other small surgical instruments) is inserted through 3 to 4 tiny abdominal incisions to detach and remove the uterus.

Treatment Options: Surgery

There are different types of laparoscopic hysterectomy. Based upon your clinical need, your doctor might perform:

A laparoscopic supra-cervical hysterectomy (LSH) allowing you to keep your cervix

Total laparoscopic hysterectomy (TLH), which removes the cervix as well

Treatment Options: Surgery

Unlike more traditional methods, laparoscopic hysterectomy usually requires only one day or less in the hospital and only 7-14 days of recovery time.

Patients also experience less scarring and pain compared to other hysterectomy methods.



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