



PROACTIVE

PHYSIOTHERAPY THERAPEUTICS

Pelvic Pain

UNCOMFORTABLE BUT TREATABLE

Many women with pelvic pain suffer in silence.

"It's the embarrassment factor," says physiotherapist Elaine Principi. "The pain is often felt in the lower pelvic area and many women are too shy to talk about it."

Pelvic pain can be caused by a number of disorders, including back problems, soft tissue inflammation, bladder infections, and more. It's common for women with pelvic pain to have some symptoms of incontinence and changes in the function of the pelvic floor, including weakness and poor support of the pelvic organs.

THE SYMPTOMS OF A PELVIC PAIN DISORDER MAY INCLUDE:

- Pubic pain, ranging from mild to very severe, described as similar to deep bruising or burning, stabbing, radiating to the groin and occasionally to the perineum.
- The pain is often accompanied by any combination of back, lower back and hip pain.
- The pain is made worse by weight-bearing activities, especially walking.
- Changing position, especially in bed, may provoke pain.
- Some women report a grinding or clicking sensation can be heard within the pelvic region.
- Many women report painful sexual intercourse.

(continued on back)

Postpartum Courses

AVAILABLE AT PROACTIVE

ProActive's postpartum health program for new mothers can help women return more quickly to strength and wellness, and help to avoid pelvic pain disorders.

Offered at both our Oakville and Hamilton clinics, the four-week program is taught by experienced and qualified staff and includes education, discussion and exercise. Classes are held twice per week, with morning, afternoon and evening time slots available. Please call either the Hamilton or Oakville clinic for more information.

Message

FROM OWNER/DIRECTOR LAURIE MCLAUGHLIN



It's shaping up to be a busy fall at ProActive. It seems that summer weather often brings with it a sense of well-being, and people are less likely to visit their doctors or physiotherapists during July and August.

Come September, it's time to get back into our usual routines. Of all the people who will walk into our clinics this fall, it's safe to say that almost every one of them will be experiencing some type of pain or discomfort. Pain is very often the motivator that drives us to seek clinical help. After all, pain is not only uncomfortable, it's inconvenient. If we have an injury that prevents us from carrying out our usual routine, we tend to get fed up and want it treated so that life can get back to normal.

The types of pain that can be treated by physiotherapy, massage and acupuncture are virtually limitless. In this issue we're focusing on pelvic pain in women and another, all-too-common malady – headaches. In both cases, people often believe that nothing can be done, but physiotherapy can often bring significant relief.

Have a safe and happy fall!

Laurie McLaughlin, Owner/Director



Oh My Aching Head...



Virtually everybody has experienced a headache at some point in his or her life. It's an affliction that can affect both children and adults, and adult women seem particularly prone to them. For some people, the headaches are severe enough to limit their ability to function and can literally send people to bed, with time lost from both work and leisure.

People who suffer from frequent and/or severe headaches may be helped by a combined medical and therapeutic approach. ProActive Physiotherapy often works collaboratively with Hamilton neurologist Rose Giammarco, who is affiliated with St. Joseph's HealthCare.

"Dr. Giammarco often refers patients to us who don't respond to medication or who have a neck component to their headaches," says clinic owner/director Laurie McLaughlin. "She is a specialist in headaches and she appreciates the role that physiotherapy can play in bringing relief to people."

The ProActive approach to headache treatment is to begin with a detailed assessment. "We ask the patient everything from what kind of activity aggravates their headaches to what kind of a pillow they use at night," Laurie says. "We also look at what kind of headache it is. It's possible that untreated neck and shoulder problems, for instance, can cause head pain." Posture can also play a role. People who habitually jut their heads forward can experience pain in the neck, jaw or head.

After determining what environmental or postural reasons may be causing the headache, ProActive works to bring the patient relief. Treatment options include manual therapy, exercises, electrical acupuncture and more.

"We're proud to say we can often achieve a substantial improvement for chronic headache sufferers," Laurie says.

Ancient remedies for headache included cutting the forehead with a knife and rubbing garlic into the incision, applying a red-hot poker to the forehead, or combining the brains of a vulture with oil and putting it up the sufferer's nose.

Source: Critical Decisions in Headache Management (Dr. R. Giammarco, Dr. John Edmeads and Dr. David Dodick).

(PELVIC PAIN – continued from front)

Although not exclusively, pelvic pain is often linked with pregnancy or the postpartum period. In these instances it can be related to the pelvic joint dysfunction – the symphysis pubis (in the front), or sacroiliac (tailbone area). The hormones created by pregnancy result in "hypermobility" or laxity of joints, which means that joints and ligaments can be strained in the last trimester and immediately after pregnancy.

"It's easy for women to injure themselves at that time because they have less muscular control and ligament stability," Elaine says. "Because of the pressure of the baby on the pelvic floor, it's not surprising that problems can occur."

A misalignment of the pelvis can occur outside of pregnancy as well. It can be caused by sports injuries, accidents, or for no apparent reason. "One recent case at ProActive was a woman in her early 20s with a pelvic floor problem who had never had children and had not suffered any obvious injury to her pelvic area," Laurie says. "Over the course of six weeks we were able to treat her successfully."

ProActive takes a team approach to combating pelvic pain disorders. Clinic owner/director Laurie McLaughlin and Elaine work together, with Laurie focusing on using manual therapy to get the lower back and pelvic joints working properly, and Elaine then taking over to work on strengthening the muscles.

"We've had good success with this approach and can often solve the problem within a few visits," Elaine says. "We 're-train' the pelvic floor muscles to provide the necessary sling support to the joints."



Kara O'Donnell

Clinic News

Congratulations to **Kara O'Donnell**, a kinesiologist at ProActive who has just been accepted into physiotherapy school at McMaster University.

A warm welcome to **Patty Nixon**, who recently joined ProActive's Hamilton clinic. An experienced physiotherapist, Patty sees patients with neurological disorders such as stroke, Parkinson's Disease, multiple sclerosis and acquired brain injury. She will also provide acupuncture and assist in clinic management.



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We've updated our web site! You'll find more information about our services and our new staff members at ProActive.

Check it out at
www.proactivehealth.ca