



## Don't ignore your pelvic floor

Anyone can be affected by pelvic floor health problems during or after pregnancy, including accidental bladder or bowel leakage (incontinence) and prolapse. Help and support is available to you.

## The pelvic floor

The tissues, ligaments and muscles of the pelvic floor act like a hammock in your pelvis to support the organs and help you to control going to the toilet. During pregnancy these can come under increased strain due to pressure from your growing baby. These muscles can also be damaged or weakened when giving birth.

This can lead to health problems such as accidental leakage of wee or poo (incontinence) or cause the pelvic organs to bulge (prolapse) into the vagina.

If you experience any of the following pelvic floor symptoms during or after pregnancy we advise that you seek help. It's common, and simple treatments will often improve the symptoms and prevent long-term issues:

- Urinary incontinence (leaking wee)
- Overactive bladder (urgency to go to the toilet often)
- Bulge in the vagina, or a heavy dragging sensation (this could be a prolapse, a descent of one or more of the pelvic organs into the vagina)
- Anal incontinence (accidentally pooing yourself or leaking wind)
- Problems with sex, such as having pain or reduced sensation

## How to access help

Hospitals in Cambridge & Peterborough are providing help and support for anyone with pelvic floor problems or concerns during pregnancy and for **12 months** afterwards.

Services will be located at the following hospitals and midwifery hubs in the region that provide maternity services:

- Cambridge University Hospital
- Peterborough City Hospital
- Stamford and Rutland Hospital
- Hinchingsbrooke Hospital

our services provide advice and treatments which can help prevent and treat pelvic floor problems.

These services will include directing you to information resources, or invitation to attend either a pelvic floor workshop, or an appointment with a specialist physiotherapist, specialist nurse or a doctor specialising in pelvic health.

## Pelvic health top tips

Having a healthy bladder and bowel can help you avoid pelvic floor problems.

### Self care-tips:

- Try and drink 6-8 glasses of water a day. If you don't drink enough, your poo can become difficult to pass
- Avoid caffeine. It can increase your blood pressure and heart rate, and also increase the urgency and number of times that you will need to wee
- When weeing give your bladder time to empty
- Try and cut out 'just in case wees', aiming for going every 2-3 hours. This will help keep your bladder able to 'hold' for longer periods of time
- Don't strain when you poo, this can weaken the pelvic floor muscles further. If you are finding your poo is difficult to pass, discuss treatment options with your health professional

## Don't ignore your pelvic floor exercises



It is recommended to do daily pelvic floor exercises during pregnancy and after birth. This will help prevent symptoms of pelvic floor dysfunction such as bladder and bowel leakage or prolapse.

Scan this QR Code to find out about these exercises and how to do them.

## After you have given birth

You may see a member of the physiotherapy team on the ward who will offer advice and exercises to help you recover. They may organise a follow up appointment for you to see a physiotherapy specialist if you are at risk or experiencing symptoms. 4-6 months after giving birth, everyone will be invited to complete a further pelvic floor self-assessment questionnaire to help identify if you have developed any pelvic floor symptoms or concerns which have not resolved.

## More information and how to self-refer if you have concerns



Head to the Dynamic Health website at [www.eoemskservice.nhs.uk](http://www.eoemskservice.nhs.uk). This website provides pelvic health advice and information related to pregnancy and after having a baby. You will find useful exercise videos, bladder and bowel health advice, women's experiences with pelvic health, and access to booking on to a webinar to speak to the team for further information.

If you live in the Cambridge & Peterborough region you can refer yourself on here if you have any pelvic floor concerns or symptoms during your pregnancy or in the year after birth. From your referral the team will contact the relevant service to support you and provide you with the appropriate care.

## Physiotherapy services

For a referral to physiotherapy services please follow the routes below:

### Cambridge University Hospital (CUH)– Self Referral:

The self-referral form can be posted to the address stated on the form or emailed to [outpatientphysio@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:outpatientphysio@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

This service is for women who are planning to have their baby at Cambridge University Hospital, during pregnancy or up to three months after birth.

### Dynamic Health Physiotherapy Services:

Physiotherapy self-referral is available across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, please use our online portal to self refer. Go to [www.eoemskservice.nhs.uk/physiotherapy-self-referral](http://www.eoemskservice.nhs.uk/physiotherapy-self-referral).

Dynamic health physio services – Cambridgeshire



Peterborough City Hospital



Cambridge University Hospitals



These designs were developed by Norfolk & Waveney Local Maternity & Neonatal System