



Importance of physiotherapy in postpartum pelvic floor health: A review

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Abstract

Background and Introduction: Pelvic floor dysfunction (PFD) is a multifactorial condition that clinically manifests as the pelvic prolapsed, urinary and rectal incontinence, and sexual dysfunction.

Postpartum pelvic pain is one such form and results from the damaging of pelvic muscles and tissues for the period of childbirth.

Objective:

- The aim of this study is to cognize the role, spread awareness & the effectiveness for evidence based practices by this contest.

Methodology:

▪ Data Source and Literature Source

Relevant articles were identified by searching from: PUBMED, cohrene literacy, Google scholar, SCOPUS, academia & Shodhganga.

▪ Data selection

Articles on postpartum pelvic floor, systemic reviews with meta-analysis are included device assisted pelvic floor postpartum, pelvic floor strengthening.

Results: More than twenty articles are on pelvic floor dysfunction; only twelve articles are matched with postpartum pelvic floor health.

Conclusion:

- Postpartum physical therapy can be effective in treating pelvic pain symptoms. Therapy may include physical exercises that patients should practice during sessions and at home.
- Now a day, also practices with help of Telerehabilitation.

Keywords: postpartum, pelvic floor, exercise, Keagel

Introduction

Pelvic floor is a group of muscles found in the floor of pelvis i.e. external anal sphincter, ischiocavernosus, bulbospongiosus, transverses perinea superficialis, levator ani, puborectalis, pubococcygeus, iliococcygeus, ischiococcygeus and urogenital sphincter.

Pelvic floor dysfunction (PFD) is a multifactorial condition that clinically manifests as the pelvic prolapsed, urinary and rectal incontinence, and sexual dysfunction.

Postpartum pelvic pain is one such condition and outcomes from the damaging of pelvic muscles and tissues for the period of childbirth.

Female pelvic floor dysfunction is a growing important social and health issue. It includes urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapsed (POP), mainly stress urinary incontinence. Pregnancy and birth are independent risk factors for female pelvic floor dysfunction that have been accepted by the general public. Consequently, women are increasingly opting for caesarean delivery, in an effort to protect pelvic floor function. However, there is not enough evidence to confirm that cesarean section actually has this benefit.

Function of pelvic floor

1. Support internal pelvic organs in the correct positions (Bladder, bowel and womb).
2. Allows self-control of bladder and bowel practice using the sphincter muscles. This allows us to control the discharge of urine, faeces, and gas.
3. This allows us to delay emptying waiting a convenient time when a toilet is available. It works by means of the pelvic floor muscles which tighten and lift the pelvic organs while the sphincter tightens around the openings of the urethra and anus.
4. When relaxed, they allow the passage of urine and faeces to exit the body.
5. Sexual function
 - In males the pelvic floor muscles are important in maintaining an erection during sex and preventing early ejaculation.
 - In females wakefulness of the tightening of the pelvic floor muscles can contribute to sexual sensation and orgasm.

6. The pelvic floor muscles play a role in breathing by relaxing and increasing the space for expansion of the lungs.
7. During pregnancy, the pelvic floor offers support to the baby and also assists in childbirth.

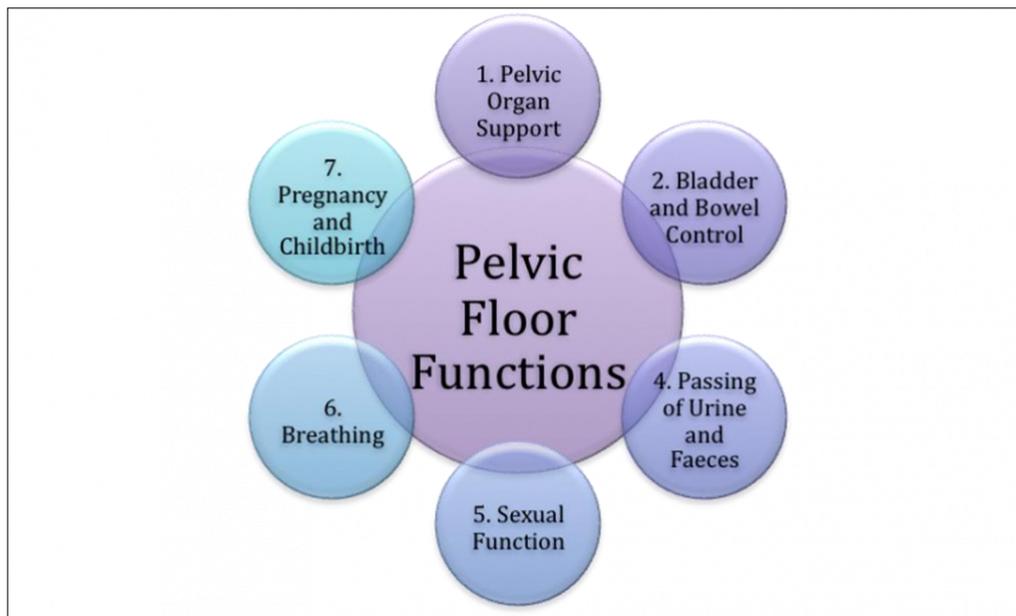


Fig 1

The postpartum period has been divided into three phases:

- The initial / acute phase which covers the first 6 to 12 hours after birth
- The sub acute phase which lasts between two and six weeks
- The delayed postpartum phase (follows the sub acute phase and can last up to 6 months or longer)

The effects of birth are usually felt most during the first 12 weeks postpartum. These first 12 weeks are also called the fourth trimester. On the other hand, in indeed, childbirth can impact a mother's pelvic health for much longer than just the fourth trimester. Thus, pelvic health is supposed to be a key focus during the postpartum period as the pelvic health foundations established during this period can have a long-term bang on mothers.

Clinical Manifestation

- Increased elasticity in ligaments, which can last 4-5 months from labour.
- Risk for thrombo embolism due to increased clotting factors
- Elongation and separation between the two recti abdominis muscles known as Diastasis recti abdominis
- Weakened pelvic floor musculature
- Muscular abnormalities and weakness in the levator ani muscle
- Urinary incontinence
- Pelvic organ prolapse
- Weakened perineal muscles
- Pelvic floor neuropathy
- Incontinence of stool and flatus
- Swollen extremities hands, feet, and ankles
- Excessive weight gain
- Low back pain (LBP)

Physiotherapy Role in Postpartum

Physical therapy, through a combination of specific treatments (such as pelvic floor muscle training), manual therapies and therapeutic exercise, can get better health outcomes for new mothers in the postnatal period. Physical therapy interventions may help with the following:

- Improve mood.
- Promote weight loss.
- Enhance psychological well-being.
- Improve cardiorespiratory fitness.
- Decrease the risk of postpartum depression and anxiety.
- Improving sexual health and sexual dysfunction.
- Guide to better outcomes assessing quality of life.

Intervention

Diaphragmatic Breathing is a powerful breathing exercise to promote efficient respiration, bring alertness to breath control and postural control, improve core muscle stability, and enhance relaxation.

Pelvic floor muscle exercises are vital for addressing urinary and fecal incontinence, pelvic pain and sexual dysfunction. Pelvic floor exercises strengthen the pelvic floor muscles through muscular hypertrophy, allowing the muscles to enhanced support the pelvic organs and structures and lessening the burden imposed on the supporting ligaments in and around the pelvis. Pelvic exercises also increase blood flow to the pelvic floor, which help expedite the healing of damaged tissues.

- Keagel exercises and other exercises that involve the repeated tensing and relaxing of the pelvic floor muscles, improve and strengthen sexual function in postpartum people.
- Biofeedback and electrical stimulation can also be used in performance with pelvic floor muscle exercises.
- Pelvic floor exercises have been shown to help reduce symptoms of urinary and fecal incontinence

Research has shown the efficacy of a protocol as an alternative or adjunct to medication for early postpartum pain reduction. Hydrotherapy has identified effects to reduce muscle spasm, diminish pain, and promote relaxation. A complete medical history of a postpartum person must be taken before attempting hydrotherapy to avoid health emergencies and negative health effects.

Some patients may be experiencing urinary frequency, incontinence or leakage these tips with patients, which may help reduce symptoms and improve quality of life.

- *Keeping a fluid diary*— Logging fluid volumes and timings of fluids over a 3 or 4 day period can help patient identify triggers that may increase urinary symptoms. Formulate suggestions such as using more decaf or herbal teas, reducing caffeine intake, reducing fluid intake after 6 pm, try sticking to water and aiming to consume glasses daily may help. These simple amendments may help reduce symptoms, even improve sleep or urgency.
- *Bladder training* – Keeping a bladder diary, this can highlight frequency of urination and can help the patient to recognize patterns or trends in their routine. If urinary frequency is the issue, try encouraging the patient to hold that urge to pass urine for 10 to 20 seconds previous to going to the toilet. Encourage them to increase the length of hold each week.
- *Distraction* - The need to pass urine so frequently can really be incapacitating and limiting for a patient. Try to encourage distraction techniques, such as meditation, listening to music, reading or painting for example. Try to find an interest-specific for the patient and encourage the use of this distraction technique to avoid running toilet runs and promote bladder retraining.
- *Constipation* – Is there anything more uncomfortable? Pelvic health issues can impact negatively on bowel function. This can lead to constipation, or from time to time the opposite. Depending on the underlying cause of a bowel malfunction concerning to the pelvic floor muscle, Physiotherapists can advise on how to manage these symptoms.
- *Feeling clogged up?* Advise using milled linseed and flaxseed, in smoothies, porridge, soup or whatever takes your fancy! Effortless dietary advice such as improving fiber intake, with vegetables and fruits. Promote wholegrain foods such as whole meal bread and pasta that can promote peristalsis within the bowel and increase movement. Educate regarding movement or simple exercise and the affirmative effect this can have on bowel movements.
- Eat less and move more! Talk about the implications a high BMI can have on the pelvic floor muscle. Extra weight puts a strain on your pelvic floor muscles and can raise the likelihood of complications.
- Whenever, wherever! Encourage the patient to be consistent with pelvic floor exercises to avoid a problem, but also to make sure that the problem does not return. Make sure the patient understands this, as often patients are concerned that those around them can tell!

Materials and Methods

Study Design

Narrative Study/Literature Review

Source of Data

Cohrane literacy, Google scholar, SCOPUS, academia, Shodhganga, PubMed, Research Gate & Academia.

Results and Discussion

More than twenty articles are on pelvic floor dysfunction; only twelve articles are matched with postpartum pelvic floor health.

Conclusion

- It has been recognized that the incidence of pelvic floor dysfunction is rising globally and is expected to increase by 35% by 2030. Postpartum physical therapy can be efficient in treating pelvic pain symptoms. Therapy can consist of physical exercises that patients should practice during sessions and at home.

- The role physiotherapists play in treating pelvic floor dysfunction can be life-changing to patients, it is important to give power to patients in seeking advice and treatment for pelvic floor dysfunction, in addition to managing their form in the long term.
- Now a day, also practices with help of Telerehabilitation.

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