Pelvic Floor Disorders (PFD) is a term incorporating a wide variety of clinical conditions which include the following:

- **Pelvic Organ Prolapse**: Bulging or protrusion (“prolapse”) of the tissues of the vagina, uterus, bladder or rectum through the vaginal opening.
- **Urinary Incontinence**: Involuntary leakage of urine.
- **Anal Incontinence**: Involuntary leakage of stool or gas.
- **Abnormal Bladder Emptying**: Difficulty with emptying the bladder.
- **Defecatory Dysfunction**: Difficulty with evacuating stool.

Symptoms may also include difficulty with sexual intercourse, pelvic pressure, and back pain with prolonged standing.

What are the causes of PFD?

There are many theories about why some women develop PFD. While we cannot be certain of the causes of PFD for all women, there are several factors associated with PFD. Pelvic floor disorders are more common as women age, at least in part due to weakening of the pelvic muscles and ligament supports. We also know that loss of nerve function to the pelvic muscles affects how the organs and muscles of the pelvis work. Women who have children are more likely to be affected by these disorders irrespective of the route of delivery. Additionally, infant size and number of vaginal deliveries are risk factors for development of a PFD. Increase in weight and obesity also are associated with more problems with PFD.

How is the diagnosis of PFD determined?

The evaluation of pelvic floor disorders includes taking a history regarding the symptoms affecting the bladder, bowel and genital organs, as well as a review of other medical conditions, medications and prior surgical therapies. A general examination is performed including a detailed pelvic exam. A determination is then made regarding which tests might help in determining the specific problem. Sometimes no other testing is necessary and treatment can be established based on the initial evaluation.
Pelvic Floor Disorders continued

Often, the diagnosis of PFD is made with the assistance of more than one group of physicians or practitioners, including urogynecologists, urologists, gastroenterologists, radiologists, neurologists, physical therapists and general surgeons. For example, among women who have urinary symptoms, sometimes the diagnosis and treatment are coordinated with a Urology specialist or a Physical Therapist. For symptoms of fecal incontinence, diagnosis and treatment may be coordinated with a Gastroenterologist, Physical Therapist, or General Surgeon.

Tests that may be needed to determine the precise problem causing the symptoms include:

- **Urodynamic testing:** special tests of the bladder function, how it empties, how it behaves at rest and with activities such as coughing and increased abdominal pressure. This test involves placing a special catheter into the bladder and measuring pressures inside the bladder with the different activities. This test is performed by a Urologist or Urogynecologist.

- **Anal manometry:** tests of the muscles that keep control of the bowels when they are not functioning normally. A special balloon type catheter is placed in the rectum to do these tests, which are performed with the assistance of the Gastroenterology department.

- **Ultrasound of the anal sphincter:** to determine if the muscle at the outlet of the bowels is broken. This test is performed in the Radiology Department.

- **Defecography:** a study of the bowels performed with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to determine if there are causes for someone having difficulty evacuating their stool. This test is performed in the Radiology Department.

What Is the Treatment for PFD?

There are many treatments for PFD, including a range of conservative and surgical options.

Conservative treatment options include:

- **Medications** are used to improve bladder and bowel control.

- **Behavioral therapy** is taught to manage dietary, stress and toileting schedules for symptom relief.

- **Pessaries** are devices that can be placed in the vagina to provide pelvic organ support. Once the correct type is fitted, it can often be managed long-term with removal and cleaning by the patient; alternatively a health care practitioner can remove and clean it on an intermittent basis.

- **Pelvic floor exercises** may be prescribed to strengthen the pelvic muscles. Consultation and treatment with physical therapists may include use of biofeedback or electrical stimulation training.

There are also a range of surgical options for the treatment of different types of PFD, including minimally invasive surgery and more complex reconstructive procedures.

**URINARY INCONTINENCE** (involuntary leakage of urine):

Several new procedures treat urinary incontinence that require only very small incisions at the vagina and possibly at the suprapubic area or vulva.

Procedures commonly used to treat urinary incontinence include:

- **Tension Free Vaginal Tape (TVT):** A permanent mesh tape is placed at the bladder outlet through a small vaginal incision and two small incisions above the pubic bone.

- **Transobturator tape (TOT):** A permanent mesh tape is placed at the bladder outlet through a small vaginal incision and two small incisions outside the vagina at the vulva.

- **Burch procedure:** A traditional abdominal repair for urinary incontinence to correct the slack at the outlet of the bladder using an open abdominal incision or an incision through a laparoscope.

- **Bulking agents:** Injection of material (collagen or another type of material) at the bladder neck to help close the bladder outlet.

- **Pubovaginal sling:** A combined vaginal and abdominal procedure that uses a strip of tissue from the abdominal wall and passes it under the bladder neck.

**PELVIC ORGAN PROLAPSE** (bulging or protrusion of the tissues of the vagina, uterus, bladder or rectum through the vaginal opening.):

- **Paravaginal defect repair:** Repair of a cystocele with correction of support problems at the sides of the vagina. The procedure can be done using either an open or laparoscopic approach.

- **Uterosacral vaginal vault suspension:** Repair of support at the top of the vagina using the original uterine support tissues. This procedure can be done using either an open, vaginal or laparoscopic approach.

- **Abdominal mesh sacral colpopexy:** A synthetic mesh is attached from the top of the vagina to the tailbone (sacrum) to treat prolapse of the top of the vagina when the pelvic floor muscles are extremely weakened.

**ANAL INCONTINENCE** (involuntary leakage of stool or gas)

- **Overlapping anal sphincteroplasty:** The muscle at the outlet of the rectum is repaired if there is a break in the muscle.

What are the success rates for surgery?

It is important to note that surgical treatments for prolapse and incontinence conditions may not result in a cure for all patients and that surgery carries some risks. Patients are encouraged to try conservative approaches to manage their problems first, and if these do not succeed, then to consider surgical repair.

For urinary incontinence and prolapse conditions, the results suggest that about 1 to 3 out of 10 patients who have surgery may, over time, have recurrent problems. With fecal incontinence, the results are not as good, and as many as half of patients may have recurrent symptoms over time. The surgical approaches can repair or compensate for the structures that have broken, but may not provide full recovery of nerve or muscle damage that has occurred in the past. Therefore, sometimes symptoms may persist. In addition, with ongoing “wear and tear” to the supports in the pelvic floor, these conditions may recur.

Many times, physical therapy can be utilized with recurrences, improving symptoms in up to 60-70% of patients.

How do I make an appointment if I want to be evaluated for PFD?

You may want to discuss your symptoms with your primary practitioner. If you need further evaluation, the following options are available at DHMC:

If you only have urinary incontinence or other troubling bladder...
MIND-BODY GROUP FOR INDIVIDUALS AND COUPLES WITH INFERTILITY

Struggling with infertility can be all-absorbing, creating stress for individuals and couples, and increasing vulnerability to depression, anxiety and relationship conflict. The use of skills in deep relaxation and cognitive restructuring, and the availability of group support, can help make this time of anxious waiting more manageable. Some research even associates participation in similar groups with increased pregnancy rates. The three-hour Saturday workshop will teach tools for eliciting the “relaxation response,” and strategies for thinking about infertility in ways that increase resilience to depression and anxiety. The six-week class will deepen these themes, adding elements of ongoing group support, and opportunities to address issues of couple well-being, nutrition and exercise, and options for family-building. Participants in a recent group described the experience as an opportunity to “get our lives back” and regain a sense of hope.

*Note: This course is intended to be used in conjunction with, not in place of, competent medical treatment, and is intended to provide education and group support, not group psychotherapy. If you have questions as to whether this experience is appropriate for you at this point in your life, we can put you in touch with the course instructor.

Saturday Workshop: Sept 11, 9am – 12 noon
$50/individual, $85/couple for workshop only.

Course Series: Tuesdays, Sept 21 – Oct 26
6:45 to 8:45 pm
$150/individual, $300/couple for series including Saturday workshop.

Tory Rhodin, LICSW

FREE PROGRAMS

Pre-registration Preferred - Call 650-2600 unless otherwise noted

Support Group For Women With Chronic Illness
Whether you find yourself living with chronic stress, autoimmune diseases, MS, cancer, diabetes — any illness with or without a medical diagnosis — you will find this group a welcoming and supportive community. The group will explore the issues of everyday living and use the methods of drumming, Reiki, energy psychology, imagery, ritual and other techniques for emotional healing.

1st and 3rd Sunday of each month
3:00 – 4:30 pm
Charon Burford, Reiki Master

“Turning Points” Breast Cancer Support Group
This group is offered for woman with any type of metastatic cancer.

2nd Thursday of each month
6:00 – 7:15 pm
Call 650-3513
for more information.
Margie Cole, MSW and Jill Butler, MSW

Share of the Upper Valley
SHARE is a support group for those who have experienced the loss of a child from conception through the first birthday. Mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents — all are invited. Call Linda MacDougal for more information at 603-643-3209.

1st Thursday of each month
7:00 – 9:00 pm

Peer Support Group For Infertility
This monthly group is open to couples and individuals at any stage of infertility, and provides a place for information, sharing and support.

3rd Thursday of each month
6:30 – 8:00 pm
*This group is held at DHMC. For more info, call Michele at 675-2256, or RESOLVE of NH’s HelpLine at 888-303-9144, or go to www.ResolveNH.org

“The Women’s Group” A Support Group For Metastatic Cancer
This group is offered for woman with any type of metastatic cancer.

3rd Thursday of each month
12 noon to 1:30 pm
*Held at DHMC:
8th Floor of NCCC – Rubin #890
Call 650-3513 for more information
Margie Cole, MSW and Briane Pinkson, LPN
Healing Arts Practitioner, DHMC

Ovarian Cancer Support Group
This group meets once a month for patients, friends, and family to network and gain knowledge about ovarian cancer and complementary therapies.

2nd Wednesday of each month
1:00 – 2:00 pm *Held at DHMC.
Call Laura Urquhart at 653-3530

“Upper Valley Nightwalkers” Restless Legs Syndrome Support Group
If you experience strange, jumping, or painful sensations in your legs or arms when you are trying to rest, and have a great urge to move, come meet other people just like you.

Wednesday, Oct. 27 and Dec. 31
4:45 – 6 pm
Kendall at Hanover
For more information call
Call Pip Richens at 603-643-2624
or Deb Griffiths at 603-448-3702

Look Good, Feel Better Program
Organized by the American Cancer Society, the Look Good Feel Better Program is a non-medical, brand-neutral program founded to help women offset appearance-related changes from cancer treatment. Each two-hour, hands-on workshop includes a 12-step skin care/make-up application lesson, demonstration of options for dealing with hair loss, and nail care techniques. A take-home cosmetic kit is included, and advice is provided on wigs, scarves, and accessories as well.

1st Tuesday of each month
10am - 12 noon
For more information, call
NCCC help line at 800-639-6918 or Doris Watson at 603-298-0198 or
www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org
Pelvic Floor Disorders continued

symptoms, but not symptoms of pelvic pressure or bulging, contact Ann Gormley, MD at the Department of Urology — (603) 650-6053.

If you have any other symptoms alone or along with urinary incontinence, contact the following clinicians at the Department of Ob/Gyn, Division of Urogynecology / Reconstructive Surgery — (603) 650-8163: Kris Strohbehn, MD, Director; Paul Hanissian, MD; James Whiteside, MD; and Corinne Kelliher, ARNP.

If your primary care practitioner has suggested physical therapy to work on pelvic floor muscle exercises, contact JoEllen Gardner, PT or Ellen Kfoury, PT at the Division of Rehabilitation Medicine — (603) 650-5978.

When needed, a multidisciplinary approach to evaluation is coordinated with other departments, including Urology, General Surgery, Medicine, Rehabilitation Medicine and Radiology.

Other resources which may be helpful include:

- The National Association for Continence 1-800-252-3337 www.nafc.org
- Bladder Health Council 1-800-242-2383 www.afud.org
- The Simon Foundation for Continence 1-800-237-4666 www.simondfoundation.org
- The International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD) www.iffgd.org

FREE LECTURE

“The Latest Information on Incontinence and other Pelvic Floor Disorders”

Come learn about the latest treatment options for incontinence and other pelvic floor disorders from the experts.

Wednesday, October 27

6 – 7 pm • Held at DHMC Auditorium E • James Whiteside, MD, Ob/Gyn

The Women's Health Resource Center

Located on the mall in Lebanon, New Hampshire.

Hours: 9:00 – 6:00 pm Monday & Friday
9:00 – 5:00 pm Tuesday – Thursday

Phone: 603-650-HERS or 603-650-2600
Fax: 605-650-2609
Web: www.dhmc.org/dept/whrs

Mailing address:
WHRC, One Medical Center Drive,
Lebanon, NH 03756

E-mail address:
dhmc.womens.health.resource.center @hitchcock.org (no spaces)

Editors
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Contributor
Kris Strohbehn, MD

THE DARTMOUTH-HITCHCOCK MEDICAL CENTER

Lebanon, New Hampshire 03756

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WOMEN’S HEALTH RESOURCE CENTER PROGRAMS – FALL 2004

IMPORTANT REGISTRATION INFORMATION • 603-650-2600

- All classes take place at the Women’s Health Resource Center, on the mall in Lebanon, unless otherwise noted.
- ALL CLASSES MUST BE PAID FOR IN FULL, ONE WEEK BEFORE THE CLASS BEGINS.
- We are unable to provide refunds for a program one week prior to the beginning of class.
- Space is limited, so please register by calling (603) 650-2600.
- WHRC reserves the right to cancel any program due to insufficient enrollment.
- Many insurance plans are now offering reimbursement to their subscribers for participation in our health care classes. Call your employer or insurance customer representative to find out if you are eligible.

F I Levinson, RN, Coordinator
Maureen Willi.ms, ND

FOOD AND NUTRITION FOR THE POSTMENOPAUSAL WOMAN
As estrogen and progesterone take their leave, our appetites and nutritional needs change. Health concerns shift to prevention of heart disease and osteoporosis, and new issues with weight and sexuality may arise. We can fundamentally impact our post-menopausal wellness by making specific dietary changes and incorporating some basic nutritional supplements. The primary focus of these two classes will be food and nutrition, but we will touch on some herbal therapies as well.

Wednesdays, Oct 20 and 27
5:30 – 7 pm • $30 for the 2 classes
Maureen Williams, ND

INTRODUCTION TO ENERGY THERAPIES – A PATH TO WELL BEING
In our busy, stressful times many people are looking for ways to relax, slow down, and feel more connected – to nature, to our families and to more joy-filled lives. Energy-based therapies such as meditation, yoga, Reiki, reflexology, and drumming, along with the power and focus of your own thoughts are some of the ways to enhance and increase your vital energies and therefore, your well-being. This day-long workshop will address what energy therapies are and how to best choose methods that may benefit you. Practitioners will give lectures about the basic energy practices and the unifying principles of these methods, answer your questions and offer you an opportunity to experience several techniques. Wear comfortable clothes, bring notebook & pen.

Saturday, Nov 6
10 am - 5 pm • $60 for the workshop
Charan Burford, Reiki Master, Frances McManus, Yoga Instructor & Reflexologist, Maureen Burford, Counselor & Energy Healer

GET IN SHAPE FOR MIDLIFE HEALTH AND BEYOND WITH JUDE POWERS
Call WHRC at 650-2600 to make an appointment at your convenience

Personal Training Sessions: WHRC is now offering individual sessions in personal fitness training and life coaching at our weight training room or at your home. Jude Powers is a certified personal trainer with The American Council on Exercise and a stress-reduction coach, trained under Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Mass. Center for Mindfulness. Jude can help you jump-start your fitness routine to reclaim your body and mind for health and well-being.

$55 for one hour session

Individual Fitness Assessments: available for cardiorespiratory fitness, body composition, flexibility and blood pressure. These assessments allow you to know your physical working capacity and your physical fitness status. The results will help determine a safe and effective exercise program to meet your needs and abilities.

$75 for 1 1/2 hour consultation

HOW TO SHOP FOR CALCIUM AND SOYFOODS
Learn which foods are good sources of bone-building calcium, and which surprising ones are not. Can’t drink milk? You can still meet your calcium requirement with a variety of tasty foods and beverages. AND….Why try soy? What are the benefits? You will have a chance to try several soy foods, and learn how soy isn’t only tofu anymore.

Tuesday, Oct 19, 5:30 – 7:30 pm
$10 for the class, includes food tasting
*Held at: Lebanon Co-op Food Store, Meet at the Co-op Service Desk
Mary Choate, MS, RD, LD Food and Nutrition Educator, The Co-op Food Stores

LIFE MAPPING: STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR LIFE’S TRANSITIONS
Think about when you’re lost…isn’t it easier to find your way when you have a map? As women, we face many transitions in our lives. What we value determines our choices. Identifying these values allow us to use them to our advantage in the decision making process. In this 4-week course, you will identify your core values, reflect on the events that have brought you here, construct a 5-year plan that will help you look to the future, and learn techniques to keep yourself centered and “on your path”. Your own personal life coach will guide you through this fun process of creating a life map to guide you into your future.

Mondays, Oct 4 - 25
7 – 9 pm • $100 for the 4 classes, includes all materials and individual consults with instructor
Kathy Mackinnon, MEd, Life Coach

RADICAL MAKEOVERS FROM THE INSIDE OUT: GET IN SHAPE PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY
This 8-week course is about moving your body and getting in shape gradually and gently. Based on Bob Greene’s Get with the Program (made famous by Oprah), Dr. Phil McGraw’s The Ultimate Weight Solution, and Andrew Weil’s teachings on integrative health, this course will teach you the tools to respond to emotional obstacles that have kept you from achieving your personal fitness and weight goals. You will be instructed in strength training exercises using free weights and bands, and you will design a personal fitness contract for yourself, to help with your success.

Mondays, Sept 20 – Nov 8
6:00 – 7:30 pm
$195 for the 8 classes, includes book and use of equipment
Jude Powers, Certified by American Council on Exercise
*Check with your health insurance or employer for reimbursement of this course

INFANT CPR – FAMILY & FRIENDS
For infants and children up to age 8. Choose one of the following dates:
Sept 7 - or - Oct 27 - or - Dec 7
6:00 – 9:00 pm • $25/person (includes book)
Sue Gregory, AHA, BLS instructor
Reiki I Training
Reiki means universal life force. This ancient healing energy may reduce stress, relieve pain and facilitate healing. This workshop includes an overview of the history of Reiki, instruction in hand positions used for treatment, and a summary of the energy centers in the body. By the end of the class each student will have received the Reiki I attunement and become certified as a Reiki I practitioner.

Saturday, Sept 25
12 noon – 6:00 pm • $100
Linda Carley, Reiki Master Teacher

Reiki II Training
Second degree Reiki is available to Reiki I Practitioners who would like to strengthen the Reiki energy flow of their treatments. The use of ancient Reiki symbols will be taught to aid in emotional issues as well as distance healing. Prerequisite: Reiki I.

Sunday, Oct 24
10:00 am – 6:00 pm • $150
Linda Carley, Reiki Master Teacher

Reiki III Training
For students who would like to enhance their Reiki skills. This class reviews the Reiki symbols in depth and also incorporates the use of essential oils, flower essences and crystals. Prerequisite: Reiki II.

Sunday, Nov 21 AND Sunday, Dec 5
1:00 – 6:00 pm • $300 for workshop
Linda Carley, Reiki Master Teacher

Reiki Share
Open to all Reiki Practitioners. Come gather with other practitioners to share and give Reiki to each other. Sure to be a fun afternoon!

Saturday, October 9th
1:00 – 5:00 pm • Free of charge

Individual Reiki Sessions
WHRC is now offering appointments for individual Reiki sessions. Reiki is a Japanese, non-invasive, “hands on” healing technique used for stress reduction and also promotes healing from within. Reiki can be used as a complementary therapy for any medical or psychological illness. Call 650-HERS to set up an appointment.

$60 for one hour session
$30 for half hour session

Linda Carley, trained under the Usui System of Natural Healing, has been a Reiki practitioner since 1993 and received her Reiki Master Teacher Degree in 1997.