Good Health

THE PELVIC REGION

By: JIM REED, PT, MHA - Eisenhower Physical Therapy Supervisor

Many people suffer from disorders of the pelvic region, including urinary and bowel incontinence, as well as pain and other dysfunctions. Although rarely discussed, these conditions can be quite debilitating to one's ability to lead a happy, productive, functional life. Contrary to popular thought, there is help for these pelvic conditions. Eisenhower's Rehabilitation Services Department has recently opened the Pelvic Health Clinic, a program designed to treat conditions relating to the pelvic floor. Staffed by specially trained physical therapists using the latest technology available and working closely with your physician, therapists first evaluate the anatomy and functioning of the pelvic region, then develop an individualized, goaloriented treatment plan, providing expert instruction in techniques specifically designed to target the patient's needs. The ultimate goal of all pelvic health treatment programs at Eisenhower Medical Center is the restoration of normal function.

The ability to remain continent is dependent on one's anatomy, urinary tract health, muscular control, psychological well being and physical abilities to respond to the need to eliminate. Any one or more of these systems, working incorrectly, can cause one to become incontinent. The goals of an incontinence program include improving one's ability to recognize and control elimination through awareness of and strengthening of the musculature involved.

Incontinence and pain in the pelvic region are common occurrences among men and women undergoing treatment for cancer. Incontinence is a frequent symptom following colorectal surgeries, prostate surgeries and any other surgery involving the pelvic floor. Recent statistics show that up to one-half of all men who have had a radical prostatectomy develop urinary incontinence, with 15 to 50 percent reporting continued incontinence up to one year later. One of the key components of the Pelvic Health Program at Eisenhower is the identification of and control of the pelvic floor musculature. This is accomplished through the use of biofeedback equipment (used to isolate these muscles) as well as electrical stimulation, therapeutic exercises and neuromuscular re-education to enhance awareness of the muscle's ability to contract. Biofeedback instruments detect when a muscle is contracting or relaxing and provide visual feedback of the muscle action. Biofeedback helps the individual to understand the muscle movement and improve muscle coordination.

Traditional strengthening exercises are an important part of any strengthening and recovery program. Many have heard of Kegel exercises for pelvic floor strengthening, and many feel that just "working out" or "being strong" will return function to this area. However, the ability to contract these muscles correctly and in an isolated fashion is vital to recovery of normal function. Some common mistakes are made when doing Kegel exercises, including using the wrong technique, contracting the wrong muscles, holding your breath while contracting, and not being consistent with the exercise program.

To identify the correct muscles, practicing stopping the process of urinating —the muscles that are used to stop urination are the correct muscles to exercise.

Through proper exercises and the right training, recovery from pelvic disorders is possible. To get started in the new Pelvic Health Program at Eisenhower, ask your physician for a prescription. An initial appointment may be made by calling 760-773-2033 or by faxing the prescription to 760-773-1634. Eisenhower's Pelvic Health Program is covered by most insurances.

Healthy Living is a publication of Eisenhower Medical Center · © Copyright 2014 All Rights Reserved · www.emc.org