

Women's health physiotherapy service

Information for patients

This information leaflet explains more about our women's health physiotherapy service. It answers some of the questions you may have about conditions we treat and what to expect from your first appointment.

What is women's health physiotherapy?

Women's health physiotherapy is a specialist type of physiotherapy that focuses on women's pelvic health and its associated conditions. From incontinence to prolapse, pelvic pain or constipation, there is growing evidence that physiotherapy can alleviate, and in many cases cure these symptoms. Our women's health physiotherapists are experienced in treating women through pregnancy, postnatal care, menopause and beyond.

We treat the following conditions:

- pelvic floor muscle tightness vs weakness
- pelvic organ prolapse
- pelvic pain
- pregnancy related pelvic girdle pain
- bladder and bowel incontinence
- constipation
- urinary frequency and urgency – including overactive bladder syndrome
- pudendal nerve injury
- interstitial cystitis (bladder pain)
- vaginal and vulval pain including vaginismus and vulvodynia
- diastasis recti abdominis muscle (postnatal tummy muscle separation)
- perineal/episiotomy and caesarean section scarring

What should I expect at my first appointment?

We will specifically tailor your assessment and treatment to your symptoms. Your first appointment will be over the phone. Your physiotherapist will take a detailed history to build an accurate picture of your symptoms and their presentation.

After your first appointment, we will offer you a face-to-face appointment for further assessment if required. If appropriate, we will offer you an internal examination. This is an important part of the assessment. It helps to examine your pelvic floor muscle, tone, strength and function. It also allows us to identify any scar tissue, pelvic organ prolapse and areas of pain or sensitivity. We will design an individually tailored treatment and exercise plan to help resolve your symptoms.

In many cases, we offer women's health physiotherapy before medication, surgery or other treatment interventions. If you do not experience improvements with physiotherapy, your urogynaecology doctor or nurse will offer other treatment options following further consultation. Physiotherapy is not compulsory, however it is encouraged as first line treatment for many women due to the strong evidence-based research support surrounding its beneficial effects.

What will my treatment involve?

The role of physiotherapy treatment is to help you maintain and return to normal pelvic floor function. Treatment may include some of the following:

- pelvic floor muscle strengthening
- core strengthening
- functional exercise programmes to help return to your normal level of physical activity
- diaphragmatic breathing techniques to assist pelvic floor muscle function

- bladder retraining
- bowel retraining (defaecation dynamics)
- fluid, dietary and lifestyle advice
- manual release techniques for muscle tightness and pain
- relaxation and mindfulness techniques for bladder and bowel urgency and pelvic pain
- teaching of transanal irrigation

If you wish to change or cancel an appointment, please contact our administration team on 020 3299 8220 or email kch-tr.therapyappts@nhs.net

If you do not attend an appointment, we will send a letter to offer a further appointment. You will be required to contact us within two weeks of the date of the letter. If we do not hear from you by this time, we will discharge you back to your GP.

Contact details

If you would like to find out further information on what to expect before booking or attending your appointment please call 020 3299 2725 or email kch-tr.womensphysio@nhs.net

Care provided by students

King's is a teaching hospital where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your physiotherapist if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleden Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS
Tel: 020 3299 3601
Email: kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net

You can also contact us by using our online form at www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.