



**THIRROUL PHYSIOTHERAPY
& SPORTS INJURY CLINIC**

Post-natal Women's Health

Education and Pilates

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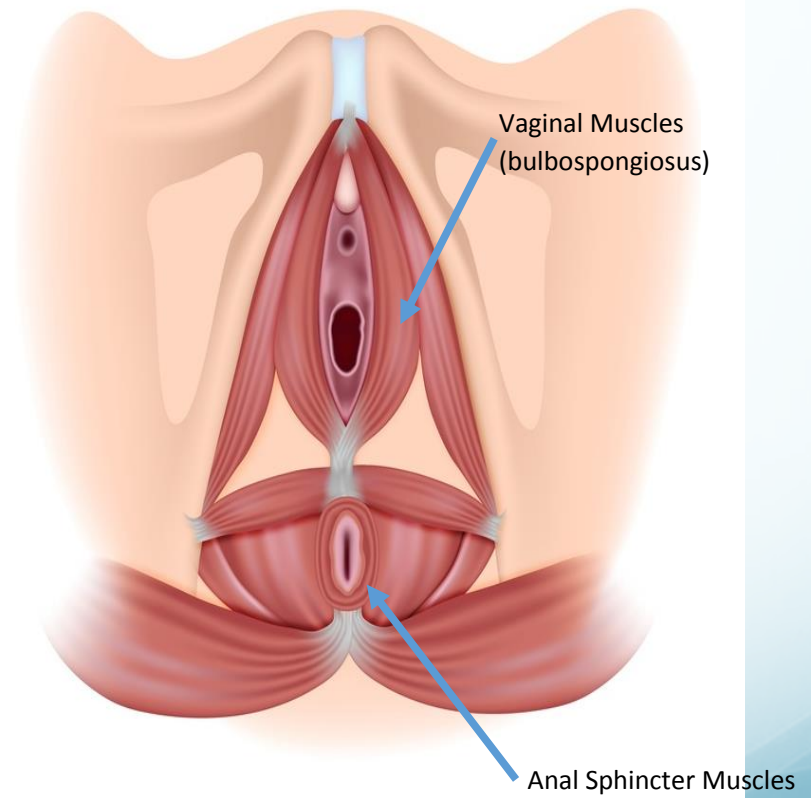
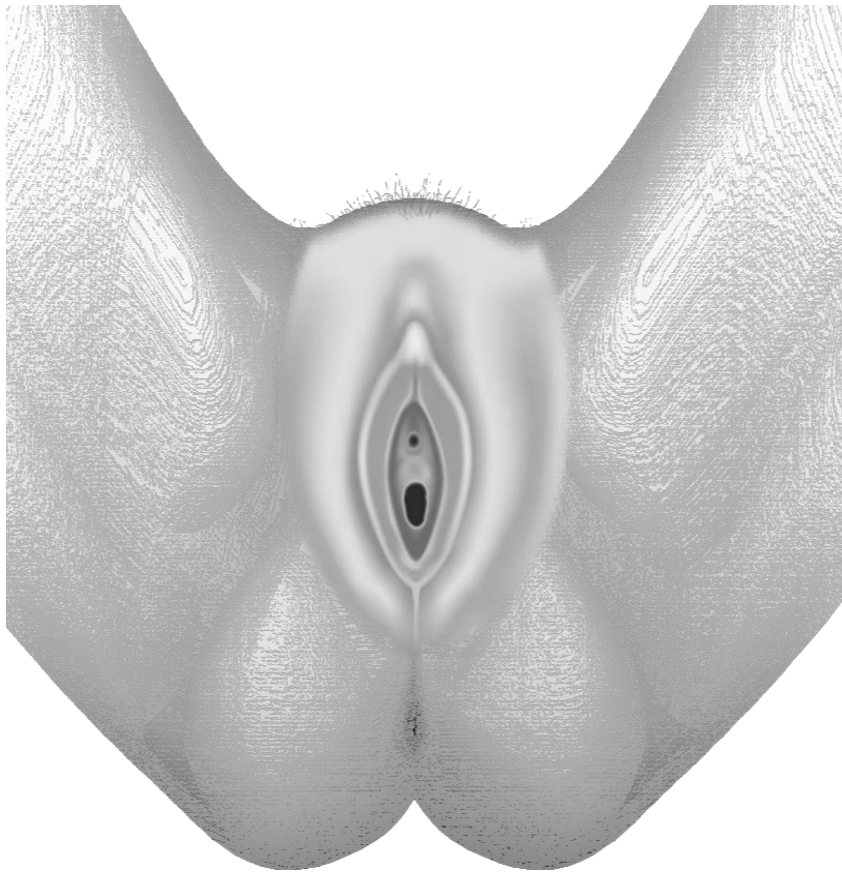
Risk Factors for Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

- ① Baby >4000g
- ② Perineal tears
- ③ Delivery – Forceps or Vacuum Extraction
- ④ Prolonged second stage of labor >1.5 hours or <15mins
- ⑤ Breech delivery
- ⑥ Increased BMI
- ⑦ Chronic constipation
- ⑧ Frequently lifting heaving weights
- ⑨ History of incontinence
- ⑩ Multiple pregnancies

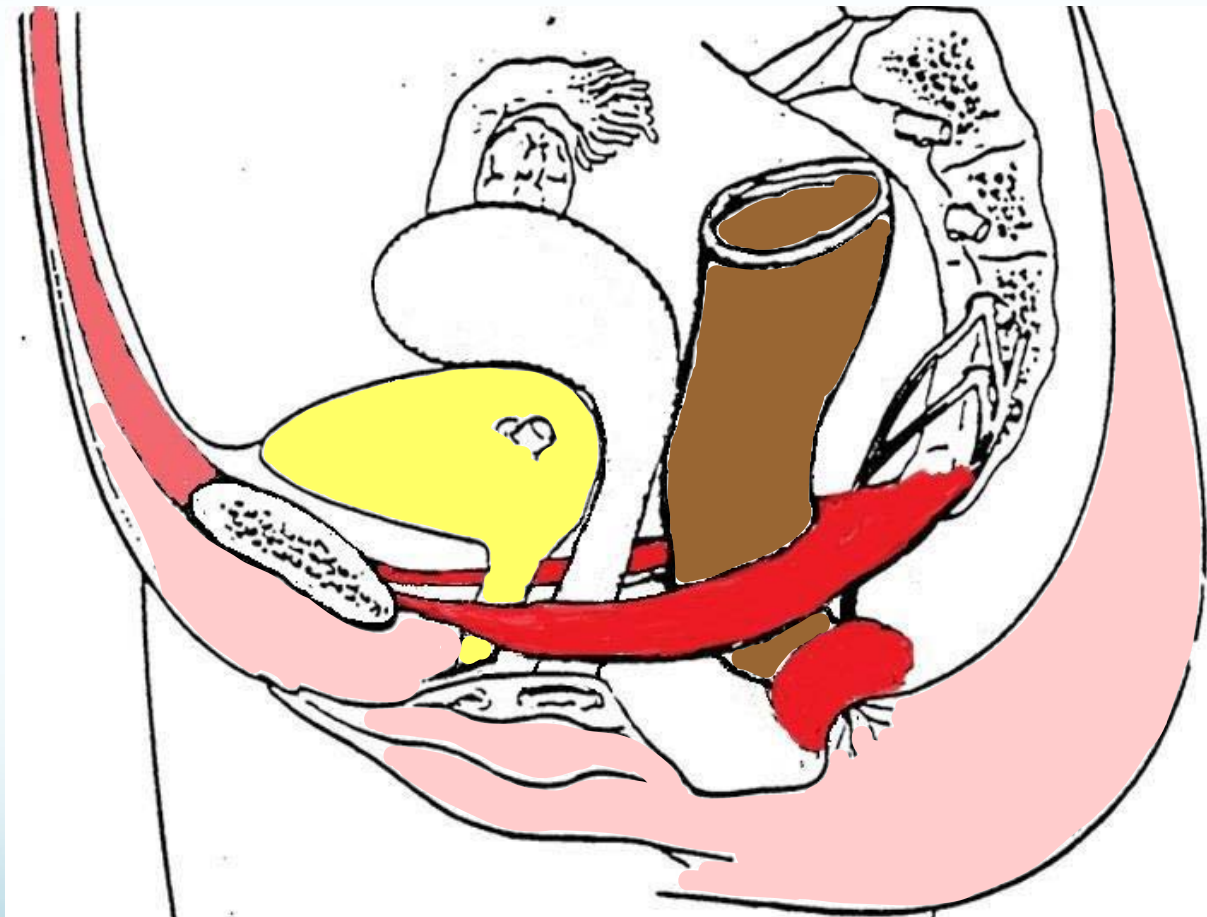
Pelvic Floor

- The pelvic floor is a group of muscles and connective tissue which support your organs
- Bladder, uterus (womb) and bowel.
- Attach to your pubic bone at the front and the tail bone at the back and form the base of your pelvis
- Pelvis is shaped like a bowl
- Pelvic floor sits like a hammock or sling

Muscles of the Female Perineum



Deep Pelvic Floor Muscles



How do I activate my pelvic floor?

- Imagine holding onto wind and stopping the flow of wee
- Drawing your pubic bone up to your bellybutton
- Imagine the lift and letting go of a piece of silk to form a tent
- On the breath out, gently squeeze and lift



Am I activating my pelvic floor properly?

- You should feel a sensation of letting go back onto your underwear
- Don't be concerned if you can only hold for 1-2 seconds at first
- Please ask if you are unsure

Most common issue postnatal: Urinary leakage when running, coughing, sneezing, lifting due to weak pelvic floor muscles

Prevents INCONTINENCE

Prevents PROLAPSE
(organs dropping down
towards your vagina)

BENEFITS OF
A STRONG
PELVIC FLOOR

Improved SEXUAL
FUNCTION, enhanced
sensation during
intercourse

Prevents LOW BACK PAIN

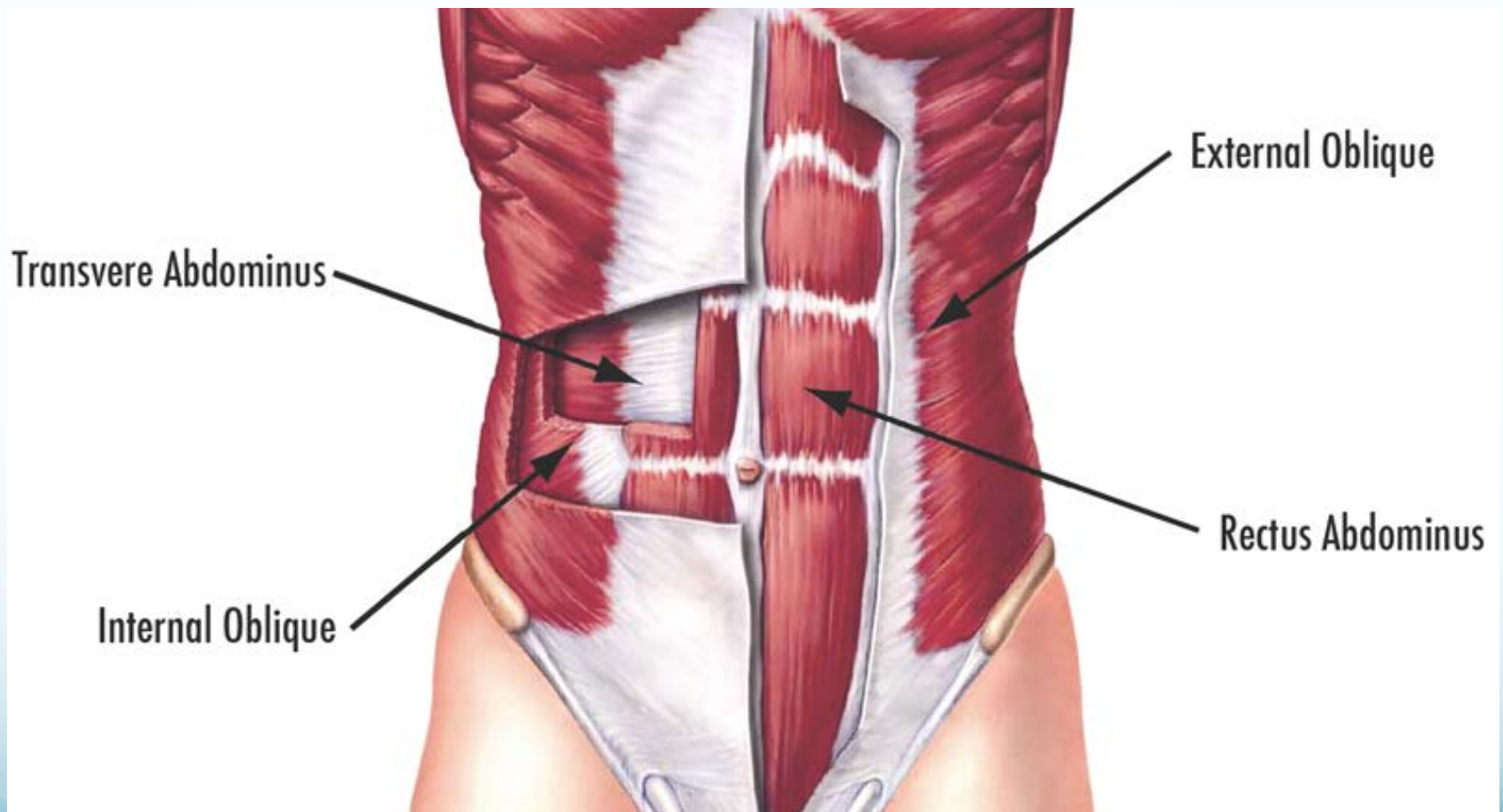
What to look out for if I have an issue with my pelvic floor?

- Urinary leakage
- Faecal incontinence, smearing on your underwear
- Unable to feel the letting go of a contraction
- Pain during intercourse
- Low back ache or heaviness
- Vaginal heaviness
- Reduced sensation to urinate or open bowels
- Constipation

Transversus Abdominus

- Deep abdominal layer
- Sits underneath your “6 pack muscles”
- Extends from your bellybutton to your pubic bone and wraps around to attach to your spine
- Like a belt or corset
- Imagine trying to to the zip up on a pair of pants that are a size too small

Abdominal Muscles



Buzz word: Core

- The pelvic floor, deep abdominals, diaphragm (breathing muscle) and deep back muscles form your core

When we ask you to switch your core on

- On the breath out
- Squeeze and lift your pelvic floor
- Draw your bellybutton to spine

How often do I need to do my pelvic floor exercises?

- Routine: Lifting, coughing, standing, feeding, getting out of bed
- Spend 2 minutes at the end of the day or the start of the day dedicated to your pelvic floor exercises
- Relax, try these different positions
 - Lie on your back with knees bent up or straight
 - Sitting
 - Lie on your side
 - On your hands and knees

Example pelvic floor exercise program

- Activate pelvic floor when lifting your baby, standing up, feeding
- Before bed, spend 2minutes

Squeeze, lift, hold, huff x 1, let go

Repeat 5x or until fatigued

- Aim to increase repetitions in a row; up to 10 in a row
- Then aim to increase length of hold by 1 second at a time
- Up until 10 seconds
- If you feel you are too tired, your pelvic floor may be too tired, try in the morning

Remember: Quality not quantity!

Example pelvic floor exercise program

Try your pelvic floor exercises in different positions

- Sitting on a chair or swiss ball
- Standing
- Lying on your side
- Lying on your back
- On your hands and knees

Some positions you will find easier than others

Start with the easier options

Progress to positions that you find more challenging

How to feel for your deep abdominals



4 point kneel PFM / TA contraction



Hands under shoulders
Knees under hips
Activate pelvic floor and deep abdominals

Abdominal Separation

- Most women get them
- The best time to assist closure; in the first 3 months post natal
- Also depends on genetics
- Not everyone's will completely close
- You can prevent it from getting worse
- Learn to correctly activate your abdominals
- **AVOID:** Sit ups, deep squats, planks, heavy lifting

When can I go back to the gym or running?

- There is not one answer that suits all
- Based on the evidence, **I would not recommend running or high impact exercise** (*burpees, jumping, skipping hopping*) **before 4 months**
- Ease your way back into it, listen to your body
- Ensure you know how to activate your core muscles
- If you get ANY urinary leakage or back ache that develops, please ensure you seek advice

Before I go back to the gym / running / high impact sport

Advised

- Pelvic floor assessment by a Women's Health Physiotherapist – *Ciara Flanagan at Thirroul Physiotherapy*

Benefits

- Reduce your risk of suffering from incontinence, prolapse and back pain
- Individualised exercise program and advice to enable a safe and timely return to appropriate exercises
- Specific pelvic floor program to suit your desired activity

But if you REALLY want to
Run before 4 months

Try running in the water –
Lower impact on your
pelvic floor

Rule #1

Do NOT do any type of exercise that causes you back pain or the feeling of a downward push, pain or feeling of pressure on your pelvic floor muscles

Pelvic floor safe exercises

Cardio Exercises

- Walking
- Swimming
- Seated Cycling
- Low intensity water aerobics

Resistance exercises

- Seated exercises (rows, bicep curls, seated knee extensions)
- Dumbbell exercises on Swiss ball
- Wall push ups
- Shallow squats and lunges

<http://www.continence.org.au>

Exercises that can strain an already weakened pelvic floor

Cardio Exercises

- Running
- Jumping
- Star jumps
- Burpees
- Boxing
- High impact aerobics classes
- Sports with rapid change of direction (tennis, netball, hockey)

Resistance Exercises

- Abdominal exercises (sit ups, crunches, double leg lifts)
- Deep lunges or squats
- Lifting, pressing or lat pull downs with heavy weights
- Leg press with heavy weights
- Dead lifts
- High bench step up / down

Services

- Mum's and Bubs Pilates Classes
- Pelvic floor assessment and rehabilitation
- Real time ultrasound
- Individualised pelvic floor muscle training program
- Advise on equipment to assist pelvic floor rehabilitation if indicated
- Management for breast conditions
- Management for back, pelvic, tailbone or wrist pain

Resources

- www.pelvicfloorexercises.com.au
- www.thepregnancycenter.com.au
- www.pelvicfloorfirst.com.au
- Physiotherapist with special interest in Women's Health – Ciara Flanagan
- Exercise Physiology and Pilates – Shauna Downes

Summary

- Activate your core: Relaxed breath in...out....lift pelvic floor...hold...let go...repeat
- Practice until it becomes a habit
- Avoid high impact exercises for 4 months post (*Burpees, running, skipping, jumping*)
- If you get any leakage, low back ache or vaginal heaviness, reduced sensation, constipation, pain during intercourse; seek advice



THIRROUL PHYSIOTHERAPY & SPORTS INJURY CLINIC

Ciara Flanagan – Women's Health

- ❖ Special interest in Musculoskeletal and Women's Health Physiotherapy
- ❖ Experience – maternity ward, ante-natal and post-natal education and exercise classes, worked as the Women's Health Physiotherapist at an Illawarra Hospital treating outpatients
- ❖ WHTA – Women's Health course

Shauna Downes – Exercise Physiologist and Pilates Instructor

- ❖ Special interest in Musculoskeletal Rehab, Pilates, ant-natal and post-natal exercise prescription
- ❖ Experience – Mum's and Bubs classes, one on one and group Pilates (matwork and reformer)