Vaginal Examinations Performed by a Women’s Health Physiotherapist

Physiotherapy Department
Introduction

This leaflet is intended to answer any questions that you may have regarding vaginal examination and pelvic floor assessment. It is not, however, intended to replace discussion with your Women’s Health Physiotherapist.

This leaflet should be read before consenting to vaginal examinations, which may be performed as part of your assessment. All of our Women’s Health Physiotherapists are female.

Why may a physiotherapist need to perform a vaginal examination?

Learning to do pelvic floor exercises will be part of your physiotherapy treatment to help improve symptoms associated with a weak pelvic floor. Having explained to you how to do pelvic floor exercises, it is important that you are able to do them correctly.

Benefits of an examination

When examining the pelvic floor, the physiotherapist can feel the muscle contraction and grade how strong it is and how long you can hold it. She can then design an individual exercise programme suitable to strengthening your muscles.
Precautions for a full vaginal examination

There are very few risks associated with a vaginal examination, but risks may exist for patients who currently have, or may have experienced the following:

- Inflammation or infection of the vulva or vagina.
- Have undergone pelvic surgery in the last 6 weeks
- Psycho-sexual problems.
- Been advised to avoid sexual intercourse during pregnancy.

If you have any concerns about the risks involved with the examination, please discuss these with your physiotherapist.

What is involved?

You may ask for a chaperone or bring somebody to accompany you.

You will be asked to remove your underwear and lie on a bed, on your back with your knees bent.

As part of the examination, the physiotherapist will observe the perineum to assess general health, you will be asked to ‘bear down’ in order to assess for the presence of prolapse. The physiotherapist will then insert a gloved finger into the vagina, feeling the pelvic floor muscles, left and right, assessing muscle tone and any areas of tenderness or discomfort.
You will then be required to hold a contraction while you cough. In order to assess your muscles further, you will be asked to hold a series of timed and counted contractions.

Can I say no?

The examination is not compulsory and you can change your mind at any time and ask the physiotherapist to stop. However, treatment is most effective with an exercise programme that has been devised as a result of a vaginal examination.

If you choose not to have a vaginal examination, the physiotherapist will still continue to give you the advice you need and encourage you to do your exercises. She will suggest alternative ways for you to assess your own technique and muscle function. These may include:

- As a **one–off** test, attempt to stop the flow of urine, mid-stream by tightening your pelvic floor muscles.
- Place your thumb or finger at the entrance to the vagina. You should feel it tighten and lift when you contract the pelvic floor muscles.
- Use of a vaginal probe with instruction from your physiotherapist.
Women’s Health Physiotherapists

The Women’s Health Physiotherapy team includes:

Jenny Sheppard
Andrea Duggan
Rachel Edward

Our contact number is: 01932 722547
Further Information
We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01932 723553 or email pals@asph.nhs.uk. If you remain concerned, PALS can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.
We can provide interpreters for a variety of languages, information in larger print or other formats (e.g. audio) - please call us on 01932 723553.

To use the Text Relay service, prefix all numbers with 18001.

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Se precisa de uma tradução por favor contacte: 01932 723553

Jeżeli chcemy, aby te informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić 01932 723553

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