

Origin.

Pelvic Floor 101

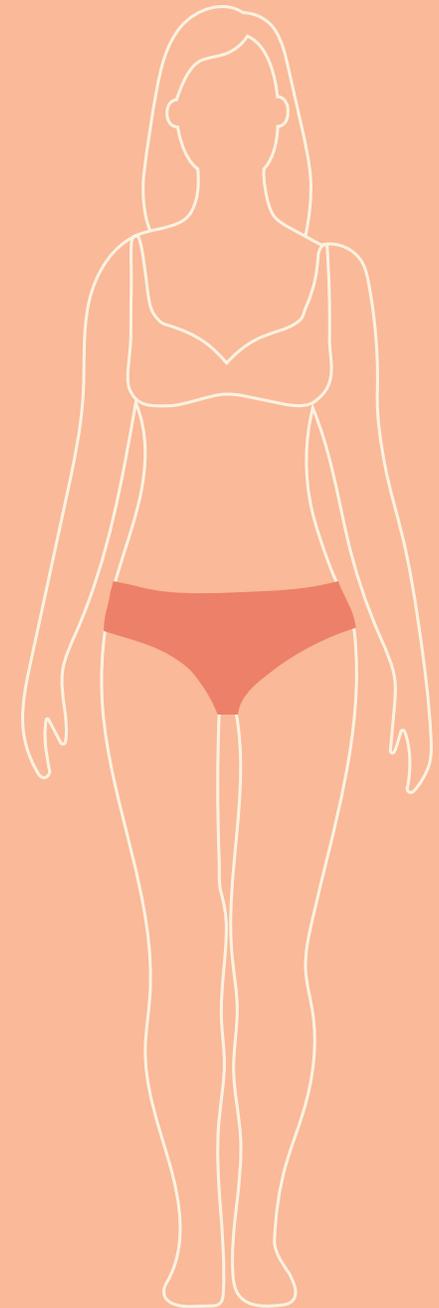
The pelvic floor is definitely having a moment.

Maybe you've seen it featured in [The Cut](#), [Harper's Bazaar](#), or [The Washington Post](#). Here at Origin, aka the epicenter of all things pelvic floor, we're excited that this amazing area of the body is finally getting some attention. The mere fact that you're reading this makes us want to throw our [vaginal dilators](#) in the air and celebrate.

While awareness is picking up here in the U.S., the pelvic floor's role in sexual pleasure, pregnancy, childbirth, and bladder/bowel control is much better known in Europe. Take France, where pelvic floor physical therapy or la rééducation périnéale is available to every new mother that needs it. This postpartum care can spare patients from a long list of pelvic floor issues, including sneeze-induced bladder leaks, painful sex, and pelvic organ prolapse (when unsupported organs slip out of place). The fact that so many of us endure these symptoms without knowing that physical therapy can treat and prevent them is unacceptable.

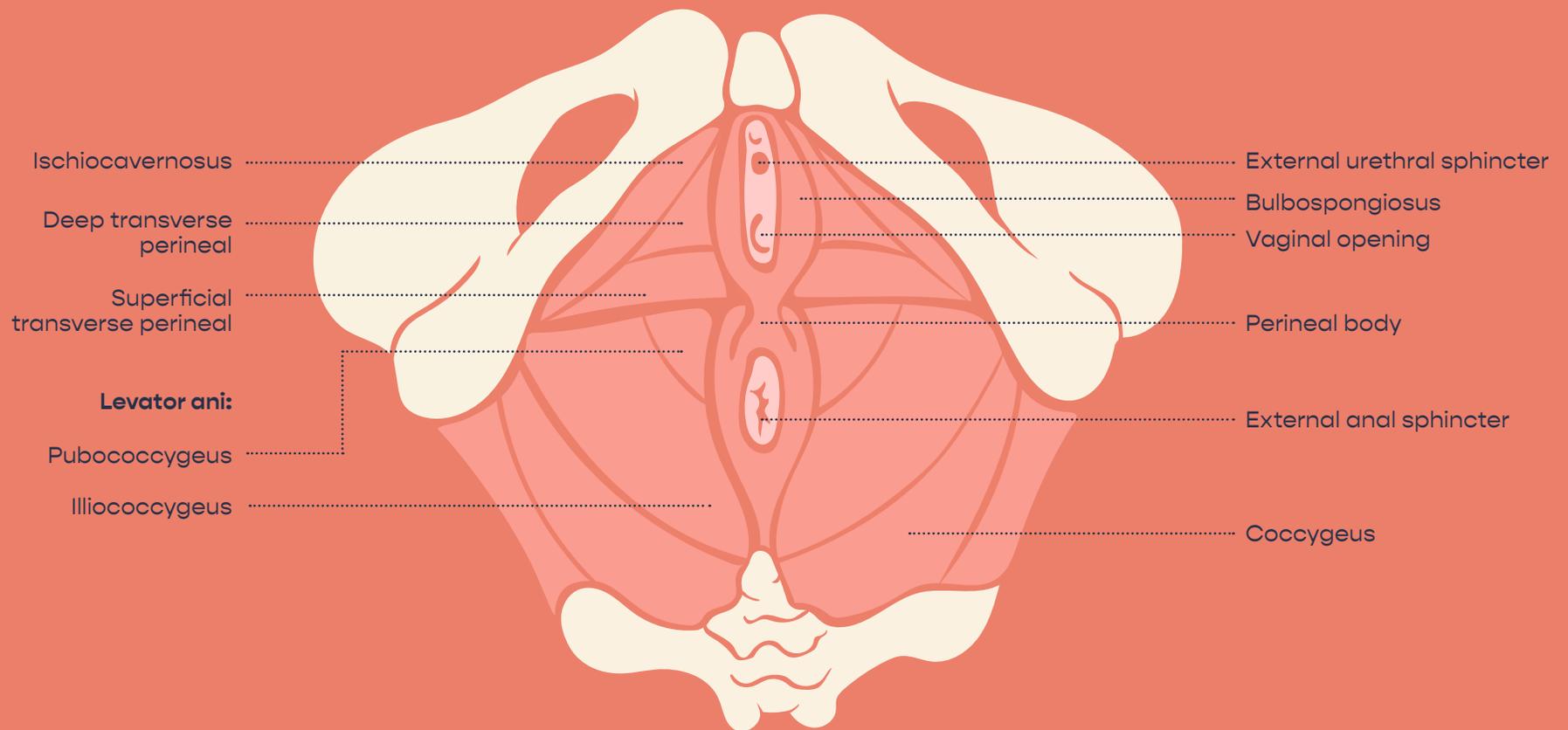
According to available data, pelvic floor dysfunction (PFD) affects 10% of women in their 20s and 30s, and more than 30% of those over the age of 40. Using pelvic floor physical therapy (PT) to prevent or minimize pelvic health issues is a concept that's brand new to most doctors, even OBGYNs. We created Origin to spread the word about the power of the pelvic floor, and to make pelvic floor physical therapy accessible to women and all individuals with vaginal anatomy, across the U.S., at every stage of life. Just by scanning this guide, you're helping that mission. Welcome to the pelvic health revolution!

Source: UChicago Medicine. (n.d.). Pelvic floor disorders. <https://www.uchicagomedicine.org/conditions-services/pelvic-health/pelvic-floor-disorders>



Meet your pelvic floor

Your pelvic floor is a complex set of muscles, ligaments, tissues, and nerves that stretch like a hammock from the pubic bone to the tailbone and between the sit bones.



Your pelvic floor has **five major functions**



SEXUAL FUNCTION

For comfortable intercourse and a strong, pleasurable orgasm, your pelvic floor needs to be able to both contract and relax.



BLADDER & BOWEL CONTROL

A strong, flexible, and coordinated pelvic floor prevents bladder and bowel leaks, aka incontinence.



SUPPORT

Your pelvic floor muscles hold up your vagina, uterus, bladder, and bowels. If they're too weak, things literally start to go south.



CIRCULATION

The pelvic floor acts like a pump for blood and lymph, moving fluid in and out of the abdomen and pelvis, which boosts circulation and decreases swelling and bloating.



STABILITY

Your abdominals and pelvic floor work together to stabilize your low back, hips, and pelvis.

What is PFD? ————— (Pelvic Floor Dysfunction)

FIRST, LET'S LOOK AT SOME STATS:

1 ^{IN} **5**

women
have chronic
painful sex



1 ^{IN} **3**

adult women
experience
incontinence



1 ^{IN} **2**

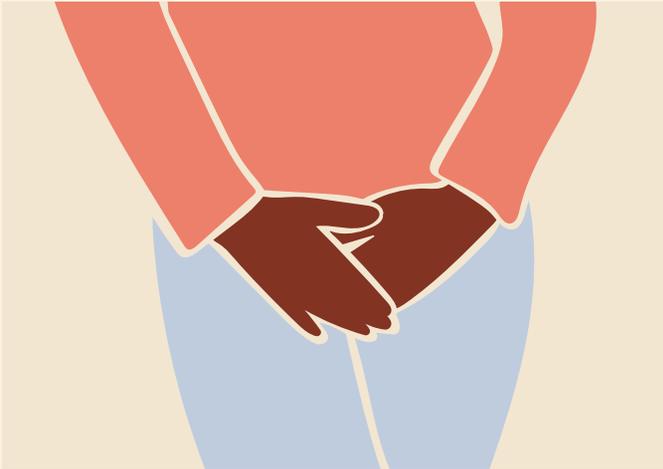
menopausal
women suffer from
vaginal atrophy



And that's just a few. Pelvic floor dysfunction means your pelvic floor is not performing one or more of its duties: support, continence, stability, sexual wellness, and circulation. Most dysfunction occurs because the pelvic floor muscles are too tight, too weak or a combination of both.

How to tell if you have PFD

Things tend to go wrong when pelvic floor muscles lose strength, flexibility, and/or coordination. A compromised pelvic floor can no longer fully support the pelvic organs, contract and relax during orgasm, regulate the sphincters that hold in pee and poop, or assist your back and hips in stabilizing your core.



If you're noticing any of these symptoms, then you may have PFD:

- Heaviness caused by poorly supported pelvic organs pressing on your vagina (you might notice a bulge inside your vagina) is a sign of prolapse
- Leaking urine (even just a little, when you sneeze) or not being able to hold in gas/poop is a symptom of incontinence
- Feeling like you have to pee unreasonably often is another type of incontinence
- Pain during intercourse or when inserting a tampon occurs with vaginismus
- Pain in any part of your pelvis, including your vulva, vagina, or bladder

When PFD is most common

Health issues related to the pelvic floor are incredibly common and can happen at any age. If you're pregnant, postpartum, or in menopause, the odds of having PFD go way up.



With pregnancy

The changing shape of your body combined with the weight of your baby puts incredible strain on your pelvic floor, which can lead to PFD. If your pelvic floor was weak or tight before you became pregnant, symptoms are likely to be worse.



After vaginal childbirth or c-section

Especially if PFD wasn't addressed during pregnancy, the pelvic floor may be weak and injured from pushing, a perineal tear, or just growing a baby for the better part of a year.



In perimenopause and menopause

Aging combined with hormonal changes that weaken muscles can compromise your pelvic floor, leading to incontinence, prolapse, and painful sex.

PFD can also be the result of trauma (including sexual trauma), surgery (c-section, vaginoplasty, hip arthroscopy), or an injury that impacts the pelvis. If you have a health condition that strains the pelvic floor — like chronic constipation or coughing/COPD — or do high-impact exercise like running or CrossFit, your pelvic floor may become weak and / or tight from overuse.

PFD is treatable & preventable!

Restoring strength, flexibility, and coordination to the pelvic floor while managing symptoms and addressing issues like sexual pleasure and fertility is complex. Pelvic floor physical therapists are medical doctors with special training in all issues related to this area of the body, including changes brought on by pregnancy, postpartum, and menopause.

At Origin, we've made working with a pelvic floor PT as easy as possible, with [streamlined booking](#), online visits, and digital exercise programs. We even take [insurance](#).

Symptoms like leaky bladder or painful sex are not something you have to endure simply because you have a vagina and uterus. We all deserve to feel good in our bodies, at every stage of life.



Oh, and about Kegels...

The only fix for PFD that you're likely to have heard of are Kegels, which are often described as "squeezing the muscles that stop pee, mid-flow." While Kegels help in some cases, they backfire in others by making overly-tight pelvic floor muscles even tighter. Doing Kegels correctly doesn't involve pausing your urine, which engages a limited number of muscles and may cause a UTI. A pelvic PT can guide you in learning safe and effective techniques.

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