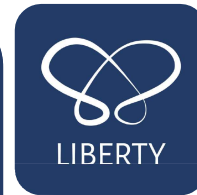


Pregnancy Handbook



Liberty Pelvic
Health Physio



Our Website
www.libertyphysio.co.nz

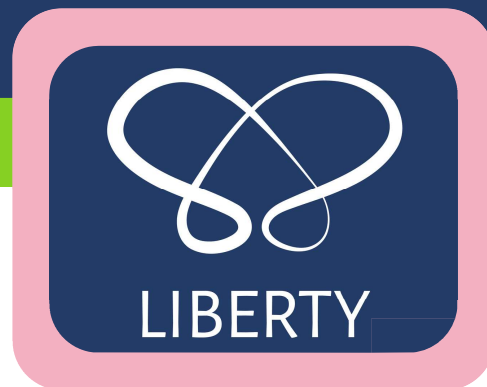
Our Locations
Merivale
Moorhouse Avenue
Cashmere

Liberty Pelvic Health Physio

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Congratulations on your pregnancy! Pregnancy can be an exciting time in your life, but it can also be daunting and a bit overwhelming. With lots of handy tips and information to help you through your pregnancy, this handbook will hopefully make your journey just that little bit easier

Common symptoms

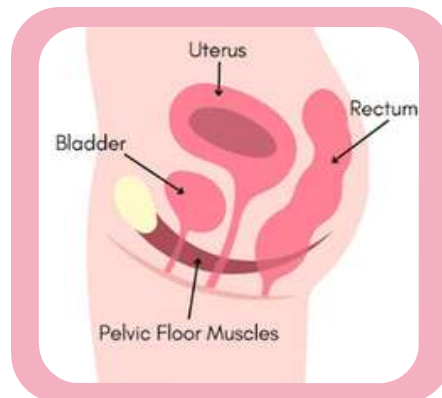
Some of the common problems during and after pregnancy are leakage of wee (urinary incontinence), leakage of poo (faecal incontinence), pelvic organ prolapse, and pelvic pain.

- 2 in 5 women experience urinary leakage
- 1 in 2 women have some degree of prolapse
- 1 in 10 women have faecal incontinence

While these are evidently common problems, it is not normal to just live with these symptoms. If you are struggling with these symptoms, we recommend seeing a Pelvic Health Physiotherapist. At the end of this leaflet, you will find a QR code that you can scan to book a Pelvic Health Physiotherapy appointment and get the right support for you.

What is the pelvic floor?

Your pelvic floor muscles are a group of muscles that sit in your pelvis like a bowl. They attach to the pubic bone at the front of your pelvis and to your tailbone (coccyx) at the back of your pelvis.



What does your pelvic floor do?

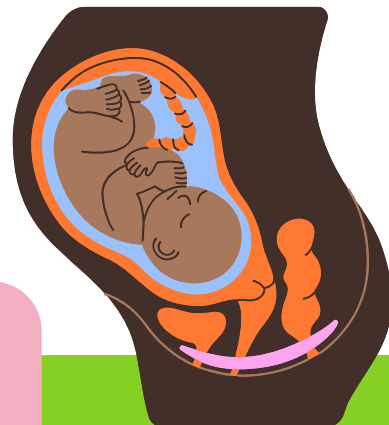
1. Bladder and bowel continence (stops you leaking wee and poo)
2. Supports the bladder, bowel, cervix, and uterus to help prevent pelvic organ prolapse (a bulging of the front wall of the vagina, the back wall of the vagina, or the cervix or uterus)
3. Helps with sensation during sex and ability to orgasm

What happens to your pelvic floor during pregnancy and delivery?

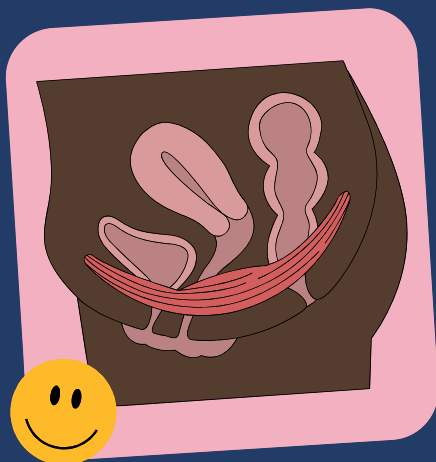
Your pelvic floor is under more pressure during pregnancy, which can cause the muscles to stretch and weaken. There are several reasons for this: the weight of a growing baby/babies, hormonal changes (which can change the structure of your pelvic floor), and baby/babies pressing on your bladder – resulting in reduced support for your bladder neck and urethra (wee pipe).

During a vaginal delivery your pelvic floor can stretch over 3 times its resting length which can cause weakness. You may also have some degree of tearing during birth. 9 out of 10 first time vaginal deliveries experience a tear, which can again affect the strength of your pelvic floor. Other factors that can affect your pelvic floor during delivery are:

- Forceps or ventouse delivery
- Pushing for more than 2 hours
- Vaginal birth with baby facing up
- Giving birth to a baby larger than 4kg
- Perineal trauma particularly 3rd or 4th degree tears



Is it important to do pelvic floor exercises during pregnancy?



YES! Pelvic floor exercises can help in a number of ways:

- Help to prevent and treat urinary incontinence
- Reduce risk of urinary incontinence following delivery
- May help to shorten how long you push for during birth
- Improve coordination of your pelvic floor for relaxation during delivery

How to do pelvic floor exercises:

- 1. Tighten your back passage (anus)** – as if you are stopping yourself passing wind. Do not squeeze your buttocks or leg muscles. Do not hold your breath. Continue to breathe normally.
- 2. Tighten your vagina/front passage** – as if you are trying to stop the flow of urine. Try to feel the muscles lifting upwards and forwards towards the pubic bone.



3. Feel the muscles working together, then relax.

4. **Tighten the pelvic floor muscles as above, and hold.** How many seconds can you hold? Aim for 5 seconds. When you let go, can you feel the muscles relax? If not, you have held too long – try again with a shorter hold. Some women may be able to hold for only 1-2 seconds and others as long as 8-10 seconds. It's important to discover your hold time.

Exercise 1 - slow pull-ups

Take a breath in. As you breathe out, tighten the pelvic floor muscles slowly. Continue to tighten for your length of hold, then relax and feel the muscle let go. Rest for 5 seconds. As it gets easier, gradually increase length of hold and number of repetitions, aiming for 10 seconds.

Exercise 2 - fast pull-ups

Tighten the pelvic floor muscles quickly. Let go straight away.

Pelvic floor exercise routine

Do exercise 1 and 2 at each session. As soon as you can, increase to 10 slow and 10 fast pull-ups. Aim to repeat each session 3 times each day, so in total you will be doing 30 slow and 30 fast pull-ups a day. As your muscles get stronger you may progress to doing the exercises in standing.

Do not practice stopping the flow of urine midstream as this may interfere with the normal process of emptying your bladder

The knack

Try to get in the habit of tightening your pelvic floor muscles before you cough, sneeze or laugh.

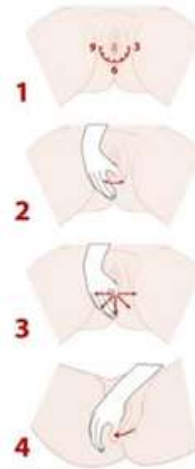
If you struggle to locate your pelvic floor or are unsure if you are doing these exercises correctly then please get in touch and we can support you with this.



What else can you do to prepare for birth?

Perineal massage is REALLY important. It has been found to reduce the chance of having a tear that requires suturing, particularly with your first delivery.

It can also help to reduce the chance of needing an episiotomy (a cut made by a healthcare professional into the perineum and vaginal wall to make more space for your baby to be born). Some evidence also shows that perineal massage can be helpful for people who have previously had a vaginal delivery to reduce the risk of perineal pain post-birth. If required, your pelvic health physio can provide further guidance on this technique.



Your bowels in pregnancy:

Constipation can be common during pregnancy, and it's important to manage. Straining can stretch and weaken your pelvic floor and lead to other issues like a prolapse. We have some handy tips below to manage this a bit better:

- Correct toilet position with feet resting on a step (as shown below)
- Avoid straining
- Relax on the toilet
- Try using breathing techniques like mooing or ssh to help empty
- Keep hydrated – aim to drink 1.5-2 litres of fluid a day
- Ensure you are eating enough fibre
- If your stools are still firm speak to GP or pharmacist about stool softeners

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Correct position



Knees higher than hips
Lean forwards and put elbows on your knees
Bulge out your abdomen
Straighten your spine

Pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain (PPGP)



It can be common to experience some pelvic pain during pregnancy. However, if this starts to affect your day-to-day activities you could be experiencing PPGP. It is estimated 25-50% people have PPGP during their pregnancy. Most of the time the pain will resolve completely by 6 weeks post-birth, but this is not always the case.

The good news is there are plenty of ways we can support you to help improve your pain, whether this is during or after your pregnancy. If you are struggling with pain, please book in to see one of our Pelvic Health Physiotherapists. Early intervention is best.



Pregnancy exercise guidelines:

Exercise in pregnancy is so important for you and your baby. The image on the next page shows the general guidelines for exercise during an uncomplicated pregnancy. However, if you are a high-risk pregnancy it is important you speak to your obstetrician about exercise precautions during your pregnancy.

There are certain activities you want to avoid during your pregnancy to reduce the risk of bumping your bump, these include:

- Horse riding
- Contact sport
- Rock climbing
- Mountain biking
- Skiing/snow boarding





Book your Pelvic Health Physiotherapy appointment today using the QR code or the link below:



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Liberty Pelvic Health Physio

Our vision:

Helping you to; Breathe well, Connect
with your body, Move with ease.



More Information:

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