

Caring For Pelvic Pain



ORLANDO
HEALTH[®]

Women's
Institute



Guide Contents

Pelvic Pain Conditions

- Abnormal Uterine Bleeding 3
- Painful Periods 3
- Endometriosis and Adenomyosis 4
- Pelvic Inflammatory Disease..... 4
- Ovarian Cysts..... 4
- Uterine Fibroids 5
- Urinary Tract and Vaginal Infections 5

Maximizing Women’s Health

- Women’s Services at Every Age and Stage of Life 6
- Screenings You Need..... 7
- Your Medical History 9
- Family History..... 12
- My Physicians 13

Chronic Pelvic Pain Conditions

Gynecological issues involving the pelvic area affect many women during their lifetime. Chronic pelvic pain is pain located between the stomach and hips that lasts for six months or longer. For women, there can be many different causes of pelvic pain. This guide explains the most common types of female pelvic conditions and what can be done to treat them.

Abnormal Uterine Bleeding

Abnormal uterine bleeding is defined as bleeding that occurs between periods or is heavier or lasts longer than normal. Menstrual cycles that are longer than 35 days or shorter than 21 days are considered abnormal. Bleeding that occurs after intercourse or any time after menopause is also abnormal.

There are many possible causes of abnormal uterine bleeding, including fibroids, polyps, infection or cancer of the uterus or cervix, polycystic ovary syndrome (an endocrine system disorder), endometriosis or adenomyosis. Pregnancy, miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy can also cause abnormal uterine bleeding.

Abnormal uterine bleeding can occur at any age. However, it more commonly occurs as a woman nears menopause (around age 50), as it is normal to skip periods or for bleeding to get lighter or heavier at this time.

Treatment of abnormal uterine bleeding depends on many factors, including the cause, your age and whether you want to have children. Many women can be treated with medication or hormone therapy, while others may need surgery. Doctors can perform endometrial ablation to treat many causes of heavy bleeding. This procedure, which destroys a thin layer of the uterus lining to stop menstrual bleeding, can be performed through radiofrequency, freezing, microwave energy, heated fluid or electrocautery.

Hysterectomy, removal of the uterus, may be an option when other treatments have failed or are not feasible. Minimally invasive hysterectomy procedures typically result in less pain and scarring, and a faster recovery than open hysterectomy surgery.

Painful Periods

Painful menstrual periods, also called dysmenorrhea, are the leading cause of lost time from school and work among women in their teens and 20s. Painful periods may include pain in the pelvis, abdomen, back and legs; abdominal cramps, headache, and fatigue.

There are two types of dysmenorrhea. Primary dysmenorrhea is caused by high levels of prostaglandins – hormone-like substances – in the uterus. Secondary dysmenorrhea can be caused by endometriosis, ovarian cysts, pelvic inflammatory disease, uterine fibroids, inflammatory bowel disease, tumors or an intrauterine device (IUD).

Diagnostic options your doctor may consider include:

- **Pelvic ultrasound exam** A noninvasive exam that produces images of the pelvic organs from sound waves generated from a probe placed on your body.
- **Hysteroscopy** A procedure that utilizes a thin, lighted tube called a hysteroscope to examine the inside of the uterus.
- **Hysterosalpingogram** An X-ray procedure performed to assess whether the fallopian tubes are open or blocked.
- **Pelvic laparoscopy** A procedure that uses an instrument called a laparoscope to view the reproductive organs.

To relieve the pain of primary dysmenorrhea, your doctor may recommend medications and certain lifestyle changes.

The treatment of secondary dysmenorrhea varies depending on the underlying condition.

1 in 7 Women
Are Affected
By Chronic
Pelvic Pain*

15% of Women
of Childbearing Age in
the U.S. Reported Having
Pelvic Pain That Lasted
at Least 6 Months.*

Between
13% and **32%**
of These Women
Have Pain That is Severe Enough
to Cause Them to Miss Work.*

Endometriosis and Adenomyosis

Endometriosis is a disorder in which tissue that normally lines the inside of the uterus grows outside of the uterus. Symptoms include painful periods; painful intercourse, urination or bowel movements; and excessive bleeding. Fertility problems can also develop.

Because endometriosis can be a challenging condition to manage, an early diagnosis and multidisciplinary medical team may result in more effective treatment of your symptoms. To check for the presence of endometriosis, your doctor will conduct a pelvic exam. Follow-up diagnosis may include an ultrasound exam, laparoscopic procedure and biopsy.

The first line of treatment for endometriosis is often hormonal medications. Your doctor may also recommend medications to manage pain. If the pain persists, surgery may be required. Laparoscopic surgery involves small incisions in the abdominal wall, allowing the surgeon to remove the endometriosis using radiofrequency, microwave energy, electrosurgery or carbon dioxide laser. For severe cases, more extensive surgery called laparotomy may be required.

Adenomyosis is a related condition in which endometrial tissue grows inside the uterus into the uterus wall. Symptoms include heavy or prolonged menstrual bleeding, severe cramping during menstruation, an enlarged uterus, pain during intercourse and blood clots that pass during menstrual bleeding. Treatments include anti-inflammatory drugs, hormone medications and, in severe cases, hysterectomy.

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease

Pelvic inflammatory disease is an infection of the female reproductive organs, often caused by gonorrhea and chlamydia, which are sexually transmitted infections. Pelvic inflammatory disease occurs when bacteria move from the vagina or cervix into the uterus, ovaries or fallopian tubes. Long-term problems, including infertility, ectopic pregnancy and chronic pelvic pain, can occur if the infection is not treated promptly.

Symptoms of pelvic inflammatory disease include abnormal vaginal discharge, pain in the abdomen, abnormal menstrual bleeding, painful urination, pain during intercourse, fever and chills, and nausea and vomiting. However, some women with pelvic inflammatory disease have only mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.

Pelvic inflammatory disease is treated with antibiotics. Women who are pregnant or with severe symptoms may need to be treated in a hospital. In addition, the patient's sexual partner(s) need to receive antibiotic treatment.

Ovarian Cysts

An ovarian cyst is a fluid-filled sac that forms on one of a woman's two ovaries. They often develop during ovulation when the ovary releases an egg each month. Ovarian cysts are usually harmless with no symptoms. However, sometimes an ovarian cyst can cause abdominal pain, swelling, painful bowel movements and pain during intercourse.

The most common causes of ovarian cysts include endometriosis, pregnancy, severe pelvic infections, hormonal problems or medications used to help you ovulate. Detection of an ovarian cyst starts with a pelvic exam. Further tests may include an ultrasound exam, pregnancy test, hormone testing or blood test to determine if you may have ovarian cancer.

If the cyst doesn't go away on its own or if it grows larger, your doctor may recommend one of the following treatments:

- **Birth control pills** to stop ovulation and prevent the development of new cysts.
- **Laparoscopy** to surgically remove a small cyst through a small incision in your abdomen.
- **Laparotomy** to surgically remove a large cyst through a large incision in your abdomen, followed by a biopsy to determine if the cyst is cancerous.



Uterine Fibroids

Fibroids are noncancerous growths that form in and around the wall of the uterus, often appearing during childbearing years. While fibroids are typically noncancerous, they can cause pain, vaginal bleeding, heavy periods, pelvic pressure, painful intercourse, obstructive urinary and bowel symptoms, and reproductive problems in some women.

Your doctor will diagnose your fibroids using an ultrasound, MRI or other imaging technique and determine the best treatment based on the fibroid's size and location. Treatment options may include nonsurgical, minimally invasive or surgical procedures to help shrink your fibroids. One such procedure, called a uterine artery embolization, cuts off the fibroid's blood supply. This procedure is performed by interventional radiologists as an outpatient procedure done under light anesthesia.

Other treatment options include:

- **Medication** Drug therapy may help alleviate heavy bleeding and painful periods, but it will not stop fibroid growth.
- **Myomectomy** A procedure that involves removing the fibroids but leaving the uterus intact. At Orlando Health Women's Institute, we specialize in this fertility-sparing procedure.
- **Hysterectomy** When other options have been unsuccessful, removal of the uterus may be necessary. Doctors at Orlando Health Women's Institute specialize in minimally invasive hysterectomy procedures.

Urinary Tract and Vaginal Infections

A urinary tract infection (UTI) is an infection in any part of the urinary system, including the bladder, urethra or kidney. Symptoms of a UTI include a burning feeling during urination, a frequent or intense urge to urinate, pain or pressure in the back or lower abdomen, feeling tired or shaky – and, if the infection has reached your kidneys – fever or chills.

UTIs are caused by bacteria that most often come from the digestive tract or rectal area and can be transmitted during intercourse. Antibiotics are the standard medical care for a UTI. If your UTI was sexually transmitted, your partner(s) will need to be treated too.

Vaginal infections, also known as vaginitis, can cause discharge, irritation and pain during intercourse and urination. These three types of vaginal infections are the most common:

- **Vaginal yeast infection**, also known as vaginal candidiasis, is caused by an infection involving an overgrowth of fungus or yeast.
- **Bacterial vaginosis** is caused by an overgrowth of certain types of bacteria.
- **Trichomoniasis** is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a parasite.

Many women mistakenly think they have a yeast infection and try to treat themselves with over-the-counter yeast medication when, in fact, they have a vaginal infection that requires antibiotic treatment.

It's important to see your doctor for any lingering urinary tract or vaginal infection to have it properly diagnosed and treated.





Women's Services at Orlando Health Women's Institute

At Orlando Health Women's Institute, we want to be your partner in maintaining optimal health – for you and your family. We offer a comprehensive network of gynecologic services for women at every age and stage of life, from preventive screenings and wellness programs to minimally invasive procedures and rehabilitation services. Here is a look at just some of our services designed for your unique needs.

Gynecology

We understand that each woman we serve is unique, with specific gynecological needs. That is why we partner with you to address the health concerns that matter to you most. We will adapt your care over time to ensure you have the information and leading-edge treatments needed at every stage of life.

Along with providing you with the most personalized, compassionate care, the doctors associated with Orlando Health Women's Institute are committed to offering the latest, evidence-based treatment options to treat a full range of conditions, including pelvic pain disorders, to get you feeling better as soon as possible.

Gynecologic Oncology

As you grow older, your risk for certain gynecologic cancers increases. That is why it is important to see your physician regularly for screenings and report any unusual symptoms, such as postmenopausal bleeding, to your doctor or nurse. If cancer is diagnosed, you can rely on our gynecologic oncologists to provide the latest treatment options at the Orlando Health Cancer Institute.

Urogynecology

Urogynecologists specialize in the treatment of pelvic floor disorders, including urinary and rectal incontinence and pelvic prolapse (bulging or falling of the vagina, bladder or uterus). At Orlando Health Women's Institute, our urogynecologists offer the latest noninvasive and surgical options, routinely treating even the most complex conditions.

Minimally Invasive and Robotic Surgery

Today, most gynecological conditions can be treated effectively through minimally invasive surgery, offering you less risk for complications, a quicker recovery and a faster return to your daily life. At Orlando Health Women's Institute, 75 percent of all gynecologic surgeries are minimally invasive, better than the national average of 30 percent. Our team will provide you with the individualized caring and technologically advanced medical and surgical care you need.

**Orlando Health Women's Institute
provides care designed for your unique
needs as a woman.**

To make an appointment, call **(321) 843-7626** or visit **OrlandoHealth.com/Women**

**ORLANDO
HEALTH**® | **Women's
Institute**