



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Your pelvic health physiotherapy appointment

Physiotherapy department

Patient information

## Introduction

**This information is about your Pelvic Health Physiotherapy (PHP) appointment. It explains:**

- Who the Pelvic Health Physiotherapy (PHP) Team are.
- The conditions that PHP can help with.
- What might happen at your PHP appointment.
- How you can get a chaperone (someone to be with you during your appointment or treatment).
- How you can get an interpreter to translate what is being said to you and what you say.
- What you should do if you cannot come to any of your appointments.

## Why have I been given this information?

You have been given this information because a healthcare professional thinks that the PHP team may be able to help you to manage your condition. They have sent you referred you (sent you) for an appointment with the team.

Reading this information will help you to know how the PHP team may help you and what to expect from your appointment.

## Who are the PHP team?

We are an experienced all female team of specialist physiotherapists. Physiotherapists help people to be able to return to doing the things that they were able to before an illness or condition made it more difficult. They can also help to prevent you from getting new conditions by giving you advice on your lifestyle and on exercise.

The PH physiotherapists can help you to avoid getting pelvic health problems and treat you if you have symptoms because your pelvic floor, bladder or bowel is not working in the usual way.

## What is my pelvic floor?

Your pelvic floor is a group of muscles at the base of your pelvis. It stretches from your pubic bone to the 'tail bone' at the bottom of your back (spine).

Your pelvic floor supports (holds) your bowel, bladder, uterus, and vagina in place. It also helps with bladder and bowel control.

Your PH physiotherapist will explain to you more about what your pelvic floor is and the things that can happen if it is damaged and not working in the usual way.

## What symptoms might people get if they have a pelvic floor condition?

**Symptoms of a pelvic floor condition can include:**

- **Bladder symptoms.** This can include changes to how often or how much you pee including leaking pee when you do not mean to.

- **Bowel symptoms.** This can include changes to the way you poo or how often you poo, including pooing when you do not mean to.
- **Changes to what happens when you have sex (sexual dysfunction).** This might be that having sex is painful or that you do not have the same physical feelings when you have sex (lack of sensation).

## **Do you treat people who are having pain caused by their pregnancy?**

Yes. We can offer you advice, treatment, and support suited to your needs if you are having musculoskeletal pain caused by your pregnancy. This includes pain in your muscles, bones, joints, tendons, or ligaments.

## **What might happen in my appointment and afterwards if you are seeing me because I have a condition caused or made worse by my pregnancy?**

- We will usually ask you to remove some of your clothing. This is so we can see the part of your body where you have pain and check how it is and what might be causing the pain.

This helps us to make better decisions about the source of your symptoms and give you better treatment.

You can wear shorts and a vest top instead of being examined in your underwear if you would prefer this.

- We will talk with you about a plan for how to treat you that will help to manage your symptoms in the best way for you. We will give you advice and usually some exercises to do.

**We may offer you other treatments and equipment.**

**This depends on what you need but could include:**

- Manual therapy (using our hands to move parts of your body).
- Hydrotherapy (exercising in warm water).
- Exercise classes.
- Support belts.
- Crutches.

## **What might happen in my appointment and afterwards if you are seeing me because I have bladder, bowel, or sexual dysfunction symptoms?**

Many pelvic floor related problems can be treated or managed with physiotherapy treatments. We aim to help you improve and manage your symptoms using treatment options including exercises and advice.

- Your first appointment will be up to an hour long. We will ask you for details about your symptoms and about medical conditions or problems that you have had. This includes talking about any problems you may have had with:
  - your urinary system (such as your kidneys or bladder).
  - your reproductive system (gynaecological problems, such as problems with your vagina, cervix or uterus (womb)).
  - your bowels.
  - being pregnant or giving birth (obstetric problems or experiences).

- We will offer you an internal examination on your first appointment or one of your other appointments. An internal examination means that we will examine your vagina or rectum (bottom) and check your pelvic floor muscles. Your physiotherapist will explain how this is done. It does not involve putting a speculum into your vagina.

After they have explained what the internal examination involves, they will ask you for your consent.

If you give your consent, it means that you understand what an internal examination is and that you agree to have one. Before you give your consent, do ask if you have not fully understood anything or have any questions.

You do not have to have an internal examination if you would prefer not to and are free to say that you do not want one. You can still have treatment if you do not want an internal examination.

You can have a chaperone present while you have the examination. We will ask you if you would like to have one. If you would like to have a chaperone our team will provide one.

- So that you get the best treatment possible we may sometimes need to send you (refer you) to another specialist for their advice on the best treatment for you.

## **Can I have an interpreter for my appointments?**

**Yes. If you would like an interpreter, please tell us:**

- Which language the interpreter will need to translate.
- Whether you would prefer a male or female interpreter.

Please tell us as soon as you can. We will do our best to get an interpreter who can meet your needs.

## Be aware

We strongly advise that you **do not** use a family member or friend to interpret for you.

## Might there be anyone else present when I have my appointment?

Sometimes we may have students or qualified physiotherapists from other hospital teams in the Pelvic Health Physiotherapy Department. They are there to learn by seeing what we do.

- We will always ask for your consent (make sure you agree) before inviting them to observe or take part in your care. You do not have to give your consent if, for any reason, you would prefer not to.
- They will not observe or take part in your care unless you have given your consent.

## Who will arrange for me to have any follow-up appointments that I need after my first appointment?

Your PH physiotherapist or the admin team will make any follow-up appointments you need. At the end of each appointment, we will arrange your next appointment with you.

## What must I do if I cannot come to one of my appointments or think I will be more than ten minutes late?

Do tell us as soon as you can if you cannot come to one of your appointments or if you think you will be more than ten minutes late.

## Be aware

If you miss an appointment and you have not told us in advance that you could not come (you have not cancelled your appointment) you will be discharged. This means that we will not see you for any further appointments.

If you cancel several appointments your physiotherapist has the right to discharge you.

If you are coming to your appointment by car, please allow plenty of time to find a parking space.

## Who can I contact if I have any questions or need further information or support after I have read this information?

Please email the Pelvic Health Physiotherapy Team:

**Princess Royal Hospital and Hove Polyclinic**

[uhsussex.outpatientbookings@nhs.net](mailto:uhsussex.outpatientbookings@nhs.net)

**St. Richard's, Worthing and Southlands**

[uhsussex.receptionwor.physio@nhs.net](mailto:uhsussex.receptionwor.physio@nhs.net)

We try to reply to you within one working day except for at weekends.

This information is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove, Haywards Heath, Worthing, Chichester and Southlands hospitals.

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