

Caring for yourself after baby is born

By Danielle Lecker, DPT



"My back hurts, my feet are swollen, I can't sleep at night and I have to go to the bathroom every 40 minutes!" If this is you, it sounds like you might be pregnant. But don't worry. Once baby comes, that will all go away on its own. Right? Not always.

While the postpartum time can be one of joy, love and excitement, it can also be filled with a little bit of apprehension, sleep deprivation and sometimes discomfort. For more than a year following the birth of a child, 37 percent of women reported continued back pain (Larsen 1999). But this is not the only symptom that occurred following childbirth. A survey of 92 women who delivered within the past three months reported numerous medical issues including headaches, urinary incontinence, leg pain, carpal tunnel and painful intercourse (Figuers 2004). All of these symptoms may interfere with daily routines and function, including the care of a newborn, if not treated promptly. Unfortunately, current medical practice shows that few women are receiving care for post-delivery conditions, possibly due to the common misconception that

symptoms will resolve themselves.

As experts of the musculoskeletal system and physical function, physical therapists are an essential part of the health-care team in the postpartum period. Physical therapy is a safe, discrete and effective way to optimize return to pre-pregnancy state and provide pain relief of numerous musculoskeletal ailments following pregnancy. A therapist specially trained in women's health has added knowledge about the physical changes of the body during pregnancy, the birthing process and the recovery period. With this additional medical training, a women's health therapist can individualize a women's care to best address her lifestyle and prepare her physically for the continued demands of raising a young child. The above noted symptoms during or after pregnancy may be common, but not normal, and they are definitely not something

Outagamie County Recycling



Recycle More – Landfill Less


www.RecycleMoreOutagamie.org



Save energy Conserve resources Prevent pollution Create jobs

you have to live with because you are a mom. Instead, seek physical therapy for these conditions and enjoy your amazing new bundle of joy without discomfort.

While numerous conditions can be successfully treated with physical therapy, one of the more frequent, but less talked about conditions treated by physical therapists after baby is born will be discussed. This common condition many moms face is incontinence, or bladder leakage. Unfortunately, as it is accepted as normal, it is often not reported to a women's physician for several years postpartum. Furthermore, since women are conditioned to the purchase of feminine hygiene products, a few drops of leakage are often overlooked as a problem in a busy mom's life. Some women attempt self-treatment, but research identifies half of all women perform these exercises incorrectly on their own without individualized instruction (Bump 1991). Yet there are several conservative physical therapy treatments that can improve the health of the pelvic floor muscles that support all the pelvic organs, including the control of urine.

Clinically, traditional physical therapy including exercise instruction, postural correction, education in bladder retraining habits, education in breathing and lifting techniques, and in-clinic modalities and biofeedback have been very successful to treat incontinence issues. A recent addition to these traditional techniques also includes a medical device designed with the comforts of home and a busy mom's schedule in mind. InTone is a customizable medical device that combines muscle stimulation and sensory feedback with a voice-guided home exercise program. With use of this device, a woman will meet with her physical therapist for set-up and follow-ups to advance her home program on the device and also receive traditional education, instruction and treatment as needed. While not for every patient, InTone can help a busy mom stay dry by improving her consistency and accountability with a pelvic muscle exercise program and offering control as a form of long-term independence. With physical therapy, a mom on the go should have improved success correctly identifying the pelvic floor muscles and performing strengthening of these muscles to eliminate leakage issues. Then she may run and chase her young child with confidence and not worry about finding the nearest bathroom. 

Danielle Lecker, DPT, is a women's health physical therapist with Orthopedic & Spine Therapy (OST). She has received specialized training in obstetric physical therapy and the treatment of incontinence, and is a certified InTone specialist. OST is a private practice with 16 locations to serve you throughout Wisconsin. Danielle currently treats patients at the Appleton and New London clinics. For more information on physical therapy services during pregnancy and postpartum, or on the InTone medical device, please call Danielle at 920-968-0814 or email ostappleton@ostpt.com.

References: "Assessment of Kegel Exercise Performance After Brief Verbal Instruction." R. Bump et al. American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology. 1991; 165: 322-329. Case Series 4.

"A Study of Postpartum Women: Description of Reported Health Issues Within the First Three Months Post-Pregnancy." C. Figeurs. Unpublished abstract. Duke University, Durham, NC. 2004. As cited in Bobb V, Badillo S. 2013. A1 Scope of the Topic Pregnancy and Postpartum. Section on Women's Health, American Physical Therapy Association.

"Symptom-giving Pelvic Girdle Relaxation in Pregnancy. I: Prevalence and Risk factors." EC Larsen et al. Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica. 1999; 78: 105-10.



Meagan Peeters-Gebler
DPT, CSCS, CMTPT



Danielle Lecker, DPT



Jill Timm
MSPT, LAT, CMTPT

Physical Therapy is a safe, discreet, highly effective and drug-free way to treat a variety of Women's Health conditions.

- Bowel/bladder incontinence
- Pre/post partum obstetric care
- Pelvic pain
- Scars/adhesion management
- Bone health

4000 N Providence Avenue
Appleton 920-968-0814

1620 N Shawano Street
New London 920-982-3670

Now →

Certified
INTONE
Specialist

ORTHOPEDIC
SPINE THERAPY

WOMEN'S HEALTH DIVISION

www.ostpt.com

TEAR OUT THIS PAGE
FOR \$5
OFF A CUT WITH
MARK OR JULIA

SHEAR CHAOS SALON
APPLETON, WISCONSIN