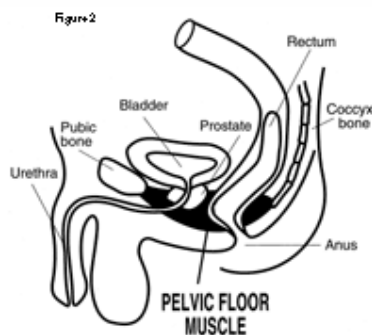




## The Male Pelvic Floor & Incontinence

The pelvic floor is a sheet of muscle and connective tissue at the base of the pelvis. It is important for both maintaining continence and supporting the pelvic joints to prevent back, pelvic or groin pain.



In normal function the prostate helps support the bladder neck, where the urethra inserts into the bladder. With a prostatectomy the bladder neck can open up more and allow urine to leak down into the urethra more than normal. This puts a greater load on the pelvic floor muscles to help maintain continence.

Many men may have had a weak pelvic floor for years before having prostate surgery. Pelvic floor weakness manifests as pain in the back, pelvis or groin in many men who have not had prostate surgery, rather than incontinence. It's very common to see young men with groin pain who have a weak pelvic floor, but rare to see them suffering from incontinence.

Stress incontinence occurs when the pressure in the bladder exceeds that in the urethra. Small amounts of urine escape if the pelvic floor is unable to close the urethra off well enough. This is the incontinence or leakage that happens with coughing, sneezing, laughing and exercising.

The urethra is normally thick and flushed with a good blood supply. It's like a pliable, thick walled spongy hose which is a bit sticky on the inside. The actual lumen or hole is small as the walls are thick and so it's not hard to reduce the flow of urine through it. The urethra becomes stiffer with thinner walls and a larger lumen with age. This type of hose is harder to reduce the flow of water through it. This makes it easier for leakage to occur as men age.

There are both deep and superficial muscles that form the pelvic floor. The deep portion is important for maintaining continence and support for the pelvic organs to prevent prolapse. The superficial portion has more of a role in sexual function. When assessing the pelvic floor with an internal examination, we are looking mostly at the deeper part. We look at the pull from the left and right sides and from the back to the front. A deficiency in just one area can cause incontinence.

Most stress incontinence can be completely cured by learning to work the pelvic floor muscles. Don't suffer in silence or think it's something you just have to put up with. Call for an appointment to help us help you.