

Parkinson's and the Pelvic Floor

The **pelvic floor** consists of a group of muscles located at the bottom of your pelvis. They help to control your bladder and bowel functions. These muscles also help to hold and support all of your abdominal and reproductive organs.

Parkinson's Disease can affect the muscles of the pelvic floor just as it affects the muscles throughout the rest of your body - it can cause them to slow down and not work together correctly. Parkinson's can also cause the nerves connected to the bladder and bowels to misfire and not communicate correctly between the brain and the pelvic organs. When the muscles or nerves of your pelvic floor are not functioning correctly, this is called **pelvic floor dysfunction**.

Symptoms of Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

- Leaking urine or stool
- Painful urination
- Inability to control bladder functions at night
- Frequently or urgently needing to use the bathroom
- Constipation
- Straining or pushing hard to pass a bowel movement
- Frequent pain or pressure In your pelvis

How Can You Manage Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

- Pelvic Floor Therapy – working with an occupational or physical therapist who is certified in pelvic floor therapy is a great place to start. These therapists can give you exercises to help strengthen your pelvic floor as well as strategies to live with any dysfunction symptoms
- Minimize Constipation – individuals who experience constipation are 50% more likely to experience pelvic floor dysfunction. Drinking plenty of water, eating foods high in fiber and antioxidants, using a squatty potty, and exercising daily are all things that can help reduce constipation.
- Visit a Urologist – a urologist is a doctor that specializes in conditions that affect the urinary tract and reproductive system. They will be able to diagnose specific pelvic floor disorders you may have as well as prescribe medications that may help manage your symptoms.