



You have been referred to the Chronic Pelvic Pain Clinic at the Women's. The clinic offers an alternative approach for women who have tried other treatment options but still have a high level of pain.

Helping you to manage your pain

The staff in the clinic come from a range of health professions. Together we will work with you to explore the range of possible causes for your pain and to offer ways to treat or to help you manage your pain.

There is good evidence to suggest that this approach to chronic pain is beneficial.

Our aim is to work with you to increase your quality of life.

What is chronic pelvic pain?

Chronic pelvic pain is pain that you have had in your pelvis for more than six months. The pain may be there all the time or it might come and go. There are many possible causes for chronic pelvic pain, but sometimes the cause may never be found.

When a cause cannot be found for your pain, treatment is aimed at helping you to manage it so as to improve your quality of life.

What do we do?

Pain can be influenced by physical, social and psychological factors. Our team is trained to look at the things in your life that may be adding to your experience of pain.

Because every woman's history or experience of pain is different, we begin by doing a very thorough assessment of your pain. After a full assessment by all the health practitioners, we will meet to decide a treatment plan for you.

Some women may also benefit from a group program which runs for two hours, each week, for 12 weeks. The program aims to reduce pain and more importantly improve function.

Health professionals in the Chronic Pelvic Pain Clinic

Pain specialist

The pain specialist is a doctor who is trained to understand your pain from a broader perspective. The pain specialist may prescribe medication; from simple analgesics, strong opioids to nerve tablets. The specialist can also provide education on how pain comes about and why it persists.

If the pain specialist suspects your pain is nerve pain, then techniques, such as a nerve block, may be provided.

Physiotherapist

The physiotherapist offers treatment techniques which may include education on lifestyle changes as well as techniques to improve the function of the pelvic floor. The aim of the program is to reduce pain and improve your ability to manage your daily activities.

When pelvic floor muscles are not working as they should, pain symptoms can include one or more of the following:

- low abdominal and vulval pain
- urinary symptoms including urgency
- bowel symptoms like defaecation pain and constipation

Your pain can be treated with a range of therapies which include the myofascial approach – a form of soft tissue therapy that works on trigger points in the body. You will have four treatment sessions aimed at teaching and encouraging self-relaxation, muscle resting tone and pelvic posture.

Psychologist

Psychologists are trained to understand how people think, feel and behave. Contrary to popular belief, most psychologists do not only work with people who are mentally ill. The majority help mentally healthy people find ways to function better, for example, training people to handle stress in the workplace.

The psychologist will work with you to find better ways to manage your pain.

Therapies include Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) which helps to change unhelpful thinking, feelings and behaviours. CBT aims to teach you that it is possible to have control over your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. It is based on an active partnership between the patient and the therapist. CBT involves the use of practical self-help strategies, which are designed to bring about positive and immediate changes in your quality of life. There is good scientific evidence that CBT is an effective treatment.

Social Worker

Social workers understand that chronic pelvic pain can affect your life in many ways, including;

- your ability to work which affects your income
- your sexuality which include intimate partner relationship and other relationships
- your ability to participate in social and recreational activities.

The social worker in the Chronic Pelvic Pain Clinic specialises in working with women with gynaecology problems and can help increase your ability to cope with the added stress caused by chronic pelvic pain. The social worker can talk to agencies such as Centrelink or your employer about income protection. Social workers can provide short-term counselling and support, information and referrals to services in your local community (for example financial counselling, relationship counselling and agencies like the Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA)).

Contact information for the Chronic Pelvic Pain Clinic

Clinic time and place

Time: Monday afternoon from 1.00pm to 4.00pm.

Place: Physiotherapy department, 1st floor.

Phone: (03) 8345 3160 Monday afternoon from 1.00pm to 4.00pm except public holidays.

Getting an appointment

You will be referred to this clinic by the gynaecologist in the gynaecology clinic at the Women's.

Further reading

Web based information

www.pelvicpain.org

Books

- Headache in the pelvis by Wise Anderson, 2003
- The Pain Survival Guide by Turk and Winter, published by the American Psychological Association in 2006 (but available in Australia)
- Manage your pain by Michael Nicholas, 2007

Other useful services at the Women's

Women's Welcome Centre

The centre offers a range of information in English and other community languages. The centre provides an opportunity for women who wish to extend their knowledge about women's health.

Open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

T: (03) 8345 3037 or 1800 442 007 (rural callers)

Language Services

We provide accredited interpreters to help communication between you and your health provider.

Tell us if you need an interpreter or book with us in advance on (03) 8345 3054.

Childcare

Childcare is available at the hospital. It is important to book in advance.

To book call (03) 8345 2098 or visit the Child Care Centre information page for more details.