



## Understanding Pelvic Pain

Pain in the pelvic cavity and the perineum is a problem that can affect both women and men. It is one of the most common causes of pain in women and is one of the most difficult to diagnose and manage. Researchers estimate that 12-20% of women have chronic pelvic pain, and up to 33% of women will have pelvic pain during their lifetime. Unfortunately, 61% of women with chronic pelvic pain remain undiagnosed. People with pelvic pain may be seen by gynecologists, family physicians, nurse practitioners, internists, urologists, neurologists, and even pain specialists, physical therapists or sexual counselors, but they often do not receive relief from their pain. Diagnosing the cause of pelvic pain is often confused by the myth that most pelvic pain is due to diseases in the ovaries, fallopian tubes or the uterus. It is also confused by the complex relationship between pelvic pain and sexual abuse in some cases.

When a woman has gynecological pain, an obstetrician/gynecologist tends to look for diseases in the uterus, fallopian tubes, or ovaries. By the same token, if she goes to a pain medicine specialist, it's highly unlikely the doctor will perform a pelvic examination and or even be familiar with the pelvis. These stumbling blocks are compounded by the fact that people are often embarrassed about pain in the perineal or pelvic area and frequently delay seeing a health care provider until the pain becomes intolerable.

It's not surprising that many people with chronic pelvic and lower abdominal pain go undiagnosed. This section on pelvic pain takes a practical approach to these problems, discussing different diagnoses and various physical and psychological causes to help relieve your anxiety about previous misdiagnoses.