

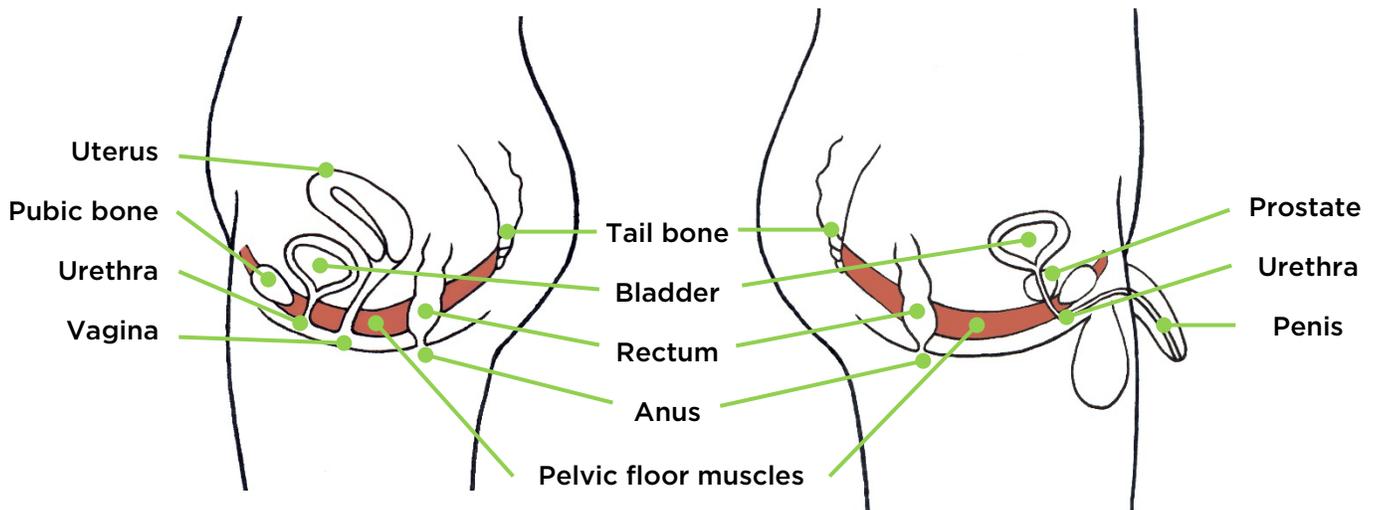
# Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

Pelvic floor dysfunction is when the muscles that control peeing and pooping do not work well. Physical therapy can help strengthen these muscles and improve toileting.

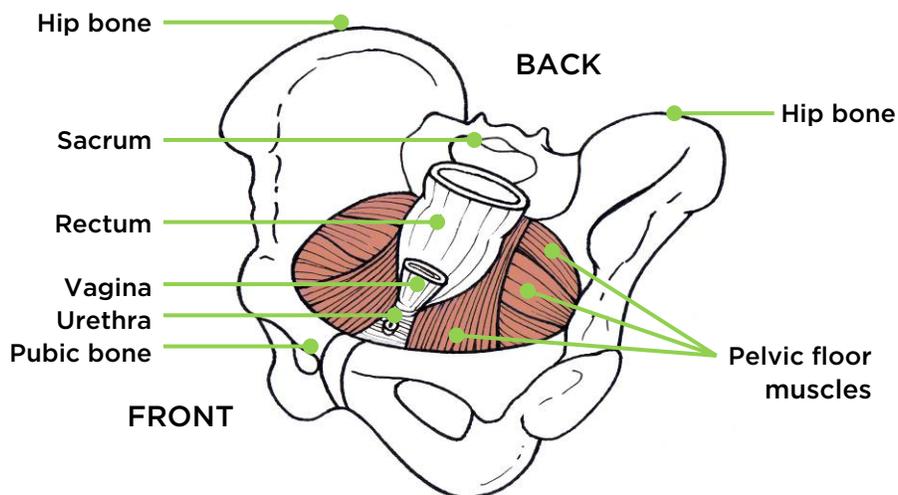
## What is the pelvic floor?

The pelvic floor is made up of muscles and other tissues between the legs from the front (pubic bone) to the back (tailbone). These muscles and other tissues hold up the organs of the stomach and pelvis including the intestines and bladder. They also help to control peeing (bladder) and pooping (bowel activity).

## Side view of pelvic floor muscles and the organs they support



## View of pelvic muscles looking down inside the body on a child with a vagina



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### To Learn More

- Gastroenterology  
206-987-2521
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

### What is pelvic floor dysfunction?

Pelvic floor dysfunction refers to a wide range of problems that occur when the pelvic floor muscles are weak, tighten suddenly on their own (spasm) or are too tight. In addition, tissue surrounding the pelvic floor organs may be irritated, very sensitive, or not very sensitive, causing bowel and bladder issues.

Most children can use the toilet by age 4 with occasional accidents. If your child does not have control of their bowel and bladder function after age 4, medical, mental health and social problems can occur. These problems can impact the quality of life for your child and your family.

### What is pelvic floor therapy?

During pelvic floor therapy, a physical therapist will help determine (diagnose) what is causing your child's bowel and bladder dysfunction. Physical therapists then create a plan to treat and manage them with exercises that teach your child to exercise these muscles (Kegels) and others. Our goal is to improve toileting now and in the future.

### Can my child benefit from this therapy?

Your child may benefit from therapy to treat some or all of their issues. Common bowel and bladder conditions that pelvic floor physical therapy can help treat include:

#### Issues with peeing (urinating)

- Peeing when you do not mean to (urinary incontinence)
- Constant or strong need to pee (urinary urgency)
- Peeing more often than usual (urinary frequency)
- Not fully emptying bladder (urinary retention)

#### Issues with pooping (defecating)

- Urge to poop quickly (fecal urgency)
- Pooping more than usual (fecal frequency)
- Hard to get poop out (fecal retention)
- Excessive gas, bloating in belly
- Pooping when you don't mean to (bowel incontinence)
- Pain with pooping
- Feels like poop is still in there (inability to empty bowels)

### Pelvic Floor Physical Therapists

For a list of pelvic floor therapists who specialize in this type of therapy, please see our handout, "Pelvic Floor Physical Therapists"

[seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE2738.pdf](https://seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE2738.pdf)