



The Center for Women

Obstetrics & Gynecology

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Abdominal Pain

Female pelvic pain is pain below a woman's belly button. It is considered chronic, which means long-lasting, if you have had it for at least 6 months. The type of pain varies from woman to woman. In some women, it is a mild ache that comes and goes. In others, the pain is so steady and severe that it's hard to sleep, work, or enjoy life.

If your doctor can find what's causing the pain, treating the cause may make the pain go away.

What causes chronic female pelvic pain?

Some common causes include:

- Endometriosis;
- Adenomyosis;
- Uterine Fibroids;
- Scar tissues;
- Urinary tract disease;
- Bowel disease;
- Physical or sexual abuse.

Sometimes, even with a lot of testing, the cause remains a mystery. This doesn't mean that there isn't a cause or that your pain isn't real.

Sometimes, after a disease has been treated or an injury has healed, the affected nerves keep sending pain signals. This is called neuropathic pain. It may help explain why it can be so hard to find the cause of chronic pelvic pain.

What are the symptoms?

The type of pain can vary widely. Chronic pelvic pain can be mild to severe, dull to sharp, severe during periods, occur during sex, urinate or have a bowel movement.

How is chronic female pelvic pain diagnosed?

At your first visit, your doctor will do a complete pelvic exam to look for problems with your reproductive system. The doctor will also ask questions about your past and present health, emotions, sexual history and about your symptoms. You may have some tests, such as:

- Pap test;
- Blood or urine tests;
- Pregnancy test;
- Ultrasounds;
- MRI of pelvis;
- CT of pelvis;
- Laparoscopy.

Finding the cause of pelvic pain can be a long and frustrating process. You can help by keeping notes about the type of pain you have, when it happens, and what seems to bring it on. Show these notes to your doctor. They may give clues about what is causing the problem or the best way to treat it.

How is it treated?

If your doctor found a problem that could be causing your pelvic pain, you will be treated for that problem. Some common treatments include:

- Oral contraceptives;
- Surgery;
- Prescription medicine;
- Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs;
- Therapy or Counseling.

You may need to try many treatments before you find the ones that help you the most. If the things you're using aren't working well, ask your doctor what else you can try. Taking an active role in your treatment may help you feel more hopeful.