

Gynaecology

Chronic Pelvic Pain

Pelvic pain is felt below your bellybutton. It may come on suddenly and severely or could be mild and last for months.

In some cases, women may be referred to a gynaecologist (a specialist in the female reproductive system). Sometimes the cause of pelvic pain can't be identified.

The following information is about pelvic pain in women, as men are rarely affected.

It covers the possible causes of:

- sudden, unexpected (acute) pelvic pain
- long-term (chronic) pelvic pain

It aims to give you a better idea of the cause of your pelvic pain, but you shouldn't use it to self-diagnose your condition. Always see your GP to get their medical opinion.

The most common causes of acute pelvic pain in women who aren't pregnant are:

- an ovarian cyst – a fluid-filled sac that develops on an ovary and causes pelvic pain when it bursts or becomes twisted
- acute pelvic inflammatory disease – a bacterial infection of the womb, fallopian tubes or ovaries, which often follows a chlamydia or gonorrhoea infection and needs immediate treatment with antibiotics
- appendicitis – a painful swelling of the appendix (a finger-like pouch connected to the large intestine) which usually causes pain on the lower right-hand side of your abdomen (tummy)
- peritonitis – inflammation of the peritoneum (the thin layer of tissue that lines the inside of the abdomen); it causes sudden abdominal pain that gradually becomes more severe and requires immediate medical treatment
- a urinary tract infection – you'll probably also have pain or a burning sensation when you urinate, and you may need to urinate more often
- constipation or bowel spasm – this may be brought on by changes in diet, medication, irritable bowel syndrome or, in rare cases, a bowel obstruction



Less common reasons for acute pelvic pain

Less common causes of acute pelvic pain include:

- a pelvic abscess – a collection of pus between the womb and vagina that needs urgent treatment in hospital
- endometriosis – a long-term condition where small pieces of womb lining are found outside the womb, such as on the ovaries, leading to painful periods



By your side

Guidance for patients

Common causes of chronic pelvic pain

The most common causes of chronic pelvic pain are:

- endometriosis
- chronic pelvic inflammatory disease – a bacterial infection of the womb, fallopian tubes or ovaries, which often follows a chlamydia or gonorrhoea infection and needs immediate treatment with antibiotics
- irritable bowel syndrome – a common long-term condition of the digestive system that can cause stomach cramps, bloating, diarrhoea and constipation

Less common causes of chronic pelvic pain include:

- constantly returning ovarian cysts – these are fluid or blood-filled sacs that develop on the ovaries
- a urinary tract infection that keeps coming back
- lower back pain
- prolapse of the womb – where the womb slips down from its normal position and usually causes a "dragging" pain
- adenomyosis – endometriosis that affects the muscle of the womb, causing painful, heavy periods
- fibroids – non-cancerous tumours that grow in or around the womb; fibroids can be painful if they twist or deteriorate, but uncomplicated fibroids aren't usually painful
- chronic interstitial cystitis – long-term inflammation of the bladder
- inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) – a term used to describe 2 chronic conditions, ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease, which affect the gut
- a hernia – where an internal part of the body pushes through a weakness in the surrounding muscle or tissue wall
- trapped or damaged nerves in the pelvic area – these may cause sharp, stabbing or aching pain in a specific area, which often gets worse with certain movements



Please continue to follow the medical advice you have been given to manage your symptoms.

Keeping well while you wait for your operation

If your symptoms are worsening, please contact the number provided on your letter correspondence from Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital or alternatively call Gynaecology Outpatients: 0121 335 8102 who will be able to help.

If you are experiencing sudden and unexpected pelvic pain, please call 111 for advice.

Contact us

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There is also a range of information and patient leaflets available on our website - <https://bwc.nhs.uk>

