

# Bodies in Motion

TOTAL HEALTH CENTER NEWS LETTER

**“Expert Care with Caring Hands”**

Volume 11

Total Health Center is a full service physical/occupational therapy clinic where expert patient care is our first priority. We treat a full range of orthopedic and neurologic conditions. Our clinic has therapists with advanced training and specialist certifications. Our goal is to help you, the patient, reach your full potential.

## I have to go NOW!

If you suffer from incontinence you are not alone. Thirty-six percent of women over 45 have varying degrees of incontinence. Although leaking is common, it is not normal. The onset of this embarrassing problem is often very gradual. It's your bodies' way of telling you that things are not quite as they should be. Loss of bladder control can be the beginning of a downward spiral that goes hand in hand with loss of self-respect as well as anxiety and depression. The good news is that incontinence is preventable and curable.

Stress incontinence is often the earliest and most treatable type. It is caused by the weakening of the muscles that keep urine stored in the bladder. These muscles are known as the pelvic floor muscles. Weakness in the pelvic floor can also cause bowel incontinence. With stress incontinence there is often leaking when forces push down on the abdomen such as when you laugh, sneeze, run, jump or perform physical exertion. If left untreated stress incontinence can progress to include symptoms of urgency (the really strong need to pass urine) and frequency (the need to empty the bladder frequently).

Stress incontinence occurs when the pelvic floor muscles become weak. If these muscles lose their strength there is decreased control over the bladder and the bladder might begin to contract whenever it wants to, not when you want it to. This is called urgency. It is sometimes described as a “knee crossing, eye watering desire to pee”. Urgency occurs when the bladder takes control of stopping and starting urination. It makes you feel like you need to “go” as soon as the urge hits you. You start to plan your life (shopping trips, outings, vacations) around where the next bathroom can be found.

To help you determine if your toilet habits are normal, ask yourself these questions:

1. Do you go to the bathroom 4-6 times/day only?
2. Do you sleep through the night or only get up once to go to the bathroom?
3. Do you have dry pants all the time?
4. Do you pass 300-400 ml each time? – one coffee mug holds 250ml
5. Do you pass water easily, without straining or stopping and starting?
6. Do you find urinating painless and a comfortable thing to do?

If you answered no to any of these questions, something is not quite right and you should take steps now to prevent further problems.

About 65% of women complain of incontinence during pregnancy. It can begin in any trimester and can be stress or urge incontinence. There may be many causes including hormones softening supporting structures, baby weight pressing on the pelvic floor, and increased fluid intake. Having a vaginal delivery is another cause. Multiple births increase this effect with each delivery causing more damage to the pelvic floor muscles. Most women are aware of the toll pregnancy takes on the body including weight gain, loss of muscle tone and lower endurance. Many women will start an exercise program to offset these changes but don't think to exercise the pelvic floor and many doctors don't point out the need for pelvic floor exercises. It is wise to start pelvic floor exercises within 24 hours after child birth.

Child birth does contribute to pelvic floor weakness but it is not the only cause. More than 1 in 10 women that have never had children leak urine at times. Many young girls have poor control of the pelvic floor because their urination patterns do nothing to encourage the pelvic muscles to hold on. Girls are often encouraged to go to the bathroom just in case in

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## Healthy Recipe of the Month

Curried Chickpea Stew with Brown Rice Pilaf

### Pilaf

- 1Tbsp canola oil
- 1 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 cup uncooked brown rice
- 3 cardamom pods
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 2/3 cups water
- 1 bay leaf

### Stew

- 1 Tbsp canola oil
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 1 Tbsp. grated peeled fresh ginger
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- 3/4 tsp ground turmeric
- 1/4 tsp ground red pepper
- 4 garlic cloves
- 3 cardamom pods, crushed
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 1/2 cups water
- 1 cup diced carrot
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 (15 oz) can chick peas
- 1 (14.5 oz) can fire-roasted crushed tomatoes
- 1/2 cup plain non-fat yogurt
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro

To prepare pilaf, heat large non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add oil and onion; cook for 6 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the next 4 ingredients and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Add water and bay leaf; bring to



their younger years (go before a car ride or go just in case before dinner). This encourages girls into frequency. Girls should be encouraged to urinate only when they need to. This helps them develop pelvic floor control.

Pushing and straining can also cause damage to the pelvic floor. People who suffer constipation can strain sufficiently to cause weakening. Other things that put stress in this area include obesity, chronic coughing or repeated heavy lifting. Recurrent urinary tract infections and cystitis (inflammation of the bladder) can lead to bladder instability in time.

Many women do not realize that they have a bladder problem until the onset of menopause. This occurs because during menopause the estrogen level drops dramatically. There are special receptors in the bladder and urethra that need this hormone to function properly. The changes in the bladder occur with either natural or induced menopause. With aging, we often have a decrease in muscle bulk and strength. This decrease in muscle strength is also true for the pelvic floor. Simple exercises can help to counteract these changes.

Another problem that occurs with aging is decreased mobility which can cause difficulty with reaching the toilet in a timely manner making accidents more likely. With decreased mobility, there are often weight gains which can increase the load on the pelvic floor. It is often true that after menopause, women suffer weight gain and this can increase incontinence.

The ability to control the bladder depends largely on the ability to control the pelvic floor muscles. Strengthening these muscles helps to improve bladder control. The exercise of the month is the Kegel exercise described below. Many women think they have been doing kegels exercises but may be doing them improperly or ineffectively. When this exercise is mastered it can be very effective for improving pelvic floor strength. There are many other exercises and treatments that can be done for the pelvic floor and if incontinence is an issue for you, you may want to discuss the option of physical therapy with your doctor.

## Exercise of the Month

### Kegels

Kegels are pelvic floor exercises and are important for all women.

1. Squeeze and lift the muscles around the vagina. When this is done properly, some light tightening around the anus should be felt.

2. A light to medium tightening of the pelvic floor muscles is best.

The person performing the contraction can internally assess the ability to squeeze or pull up with the muscles around the vagina. Do this by inserting 1 or 2 fingers into the vagina while you lift and squeeze the muscles.

Begin practicing while lying down in a comfortable, well supported position on your back or side or in a reclined position. Don't hold as hard as you can. Practice using the pelvic floor muscles until you can do them in different settings (sitting or standing) and progress to holding the kegel while you do functional activities such as going sit to stand or reaching.

A series of steady squeezes for 8-10 seconds each is the goal but few can hold that long when starting out. When you feel the muscle beginning to release, stop the effort. Alternate with short periods of rest for at least 25 to 30 seconds. For most people, 25-30 kegels per day is enough. You can also perform quick flicks of the pelvic floor muscles to work the fast twitch muscle fibers. Do these fast flicks of the muscle with no break in between.

If you stop exercising, pelvic floor weakness will usually return.

boil. Cover, reduce heat, simmer x 45 min. Discard cardamom, cinnamon and bay leaf.

To prepare stew, heat a large dutch oven over med.-high heat. Add oil, onions and saute x 6 min. Add ginger and next 7 ingredients, cook for 1 min. Add water, carrot, salt, chick peas and tomatoes; bring to boil. Cover, simmer x 20 min. Discard cardamom and cinnamon stick. Place 1 cup rice in bowls and put 1 ¼ cups stew over rice. Top each with 2 Tbsp. yogurt and 1 tbsp. cilantro.

## Patient Testimonials

I am reminded of the saying "give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime." I feel that while I was treated here I learned how to care for my back giving me the best chance to have a strong, functional and pain free back. – Earl

Excellent care. My therapist did a fantastic job. Friendly staff and caring environment. Will definitely recommend this facility to family and friends alike. – Emeka

This is the second time in less than a year I have been here for therapy. I would highly recommend them. I have been very happy with the results both times. – Norma