

# THE CONFIDENT TRAINERS GUIDE TO SAFE TRAINING OF THE FEMALE PELVIC FLAW

**A workshop for fitness professionals**

**Presented by**

Mary O'Dwyer  
MAPA, BPhy, Post Grad Cert Pelvic Floor Rehab & Contin.

**Senior Teaching Fellow  
School of Health Science & Medicine  
Bond University  
Gold Coast, Australia**

**Author- 'My Pelvic Flaw' and 'Hold It Sister'- The confident girl's  
guide to a leak free life  
[www.holditsister.com](http://www.holditsister.com)**

© Mary O'Dwyer 2009  
This work must not be reproduced without the written permission of  
the author and publisher.

## **Contents**

Introduction
What is the Pelvic floor?
The relationship between pelvic floor and core muscles
What is pelvic floor dysfunction?
Functions of the pelvic floor
What causes Pelvic floor damage?
At risk populations of females with a higher risk of pelvic floor dysfunction
The role of the pelvic floor during activity
Case studies
Why training women is different
The trainers role
Training posture
Postural control prac
Breathing prac
Exercise programmes for at risk women
References
Exam questions
Feedback

**To Book a One Day Seminar**

**Contact: [mary@redsok.com.au](mailto:mary@redsok.com.au)**

**Seminar Fee: \$150.00**

## Introduction

Research shows a high rate of pelvic floor dysfunction in women. The rate of bladder incontinence is 40% although higher in certain populations eg. Pregnant women, post birth mums, women with neurological problems, overweight and diabetic women, those with collagen disease, chest disease, smokers and elite sporting women.

50% of women have vaginal pelvic organ prolapse (the bladder, cervix or bowel can bulge out vaginally). Rates of women with hypertonic pelvic floors vary (a pelvic floor which is too tight can cause muscle weakness, poor bladder control and pain through muscle trigger points)

For many well researched reasons women need to exercise, yet exercise which is too challenging for the women in the above populations, has the potential to aggravate their pelvic floor dysfunction.

Research is now identifying a difference in how continent and incontinent women activate their pelvic floor muscles. The pelvic floor in continent women contracts first and automatically with activity. The incontinent women contract Rectus Abdominis and External Obliques first, before their pelvic floor. This uncoordinated activation causes higher intra abdominal pressure down onto the pelvic floor, causing incontinence. Exercise which is too challenging for affected women, risks forcing more intra abdominal pressure down onto the floor, in turn aggravating incontinence and prolapse.

Research has identified the co contraction of the pelvic floor with Transversus Abdominis and Multifidus, to provide core stability with activity. When the Pelvic floor is uncoordinated with other core muscles; challenging exercise can train an incorrect muscle pattern.

So how, as a Trainer, do you have any idea if your client has pelvic floor problems?

Until now, a head in the sand approach has been used by both the client and the trainer usually due to personal embarrassment. Even if you are aware your client rushes to the toilet before every class or refuses to jog or do certain exercises, would you know how to modify her programme? Which exercises should be avoided and which ones should become a focus with training? Do you have a working relationship with a Women's Health Physiotherapist?

Fitness Professionals are at the front line of teaching exercise. Women's pelvic floor health will be advanced through educating Fitness Professionals about pelvic floor dysfunction and the effect of exercise on the female pelvic floor. While it would be inappropriate for Fitness Professionals to teach pelvic floor exercises (due to the complex nature of the pelvic floor and other issues involved), identifying the affected women before they begin training and modifying their exercise programme is essential.

At present there are no protocols in place for questionnaire assessment to alert the trainer to the presence of pelvic floor dysfunction in their clients. Guidelines are required for suitable exercise programme for affected women so they continue to exercise safely.

## **Learning Outcomes**

As a result of this workshop, participants will

- Understand the structure and roles of the pelvic floor in the female body
- Understand female pelvic floor dysfunction
- Understand how pelvic floor dysfunction can be aggravated by inappropriate training
- Understand the 'at risk' populations of women with increased rates of pelvic floor dysfunction
- Understand the link between incorrect abdominal patterns, posture, breathing and pelvic floor dysfunction
- Use Case Studies in a group situation to understand why females must train the pelvic floor/core muscles coordinated action first before starting challenging exercise programmes
  
- Learn appropriate exercise strategies for training females with pelvic floor dysfunction
- Learn when to refer for specific rehabilitation of pelvic floor dysfunction
- Test knowledge through written exam questions

## **Learning Strategies**

- Power point presentation
- Take home manuals
- Case studies
- Practical sessions on posture, breathing, and assessment of functional and non functional abdominal patterns of activation
- Practical session on pelvic control with exercise and suitable exercise protocols
- Examination questions