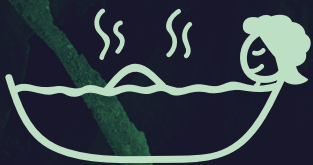


Break free

from chronic pelvic pain
and feel good again.



SOLá
THERAPY

HOMECARE GUIDE

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Get the most from your SoLá Therapy

PELVIC PAIN TRIGGERS

IDENTIFY & AVOID PAIN TRIGGERS

The benefits of SoLá Therapy can be maximized by identifying and avoiding pain triggers.

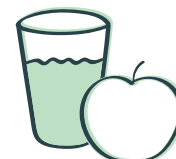
Common triggers for people with Chronic Pelvic Pain (CPP) can include:

- ✗ **Stress:** At work and/or in your day-to-day life.
- ✗ **Lack of sleep:** Plays a major role in how you feel the next day.
- ✗ **Excessive physical activity or exercise:** Too much, too soon can trigger pelvic muscle pain.
- ✗ **Significant inactivity:** Sitting (or standing) for long periods can also trigger pelvic muscle pain.



FOOD & FLUIDS ARE FACTORS

What you eat and how much fluid you drink are important factors in triggering pain flares. Drinking too much fluid (over 64 ounces per day) or not drinking enough (under 24 ounces per day) can trigger both bladder symptoms and pelvic floor muscle symptoms. If you also suffer from irritable bowel problems, foods that are high in acid (such as red tomato sauces, spicy foods, or citrus fruits and drinks) can be triggers.



If you search the Internet, you will find guidance for anti-inflammatory diets to reduce inflammation throughout the body. Many of these diets are beneficial for those who suffer from chronic pain. The paleo diet is one example.

Remember!

Minimize stress, get plenty of sleep, and consider an anti-inflammatory diet.

Get the most from your SoLá Therapy

PELVIC PAIN TRIGGERS

STAY REGULAR

Keeping your stools soft to prevent pelvic muscle straining is important. Supplements should be your first approach (called first-line therapy) to help produce regular soft stools (i.e., not too hard and not too loose).

If constipation is a problem: Taking a stool softener (such as over-the-counter brands MiraLAX® or Colace®) should be considered.

If your stools tend to be loose and more like diarrhea: Taking fiber supplements (such as Metamucil® or Benefiber®) are often beneficial.



Remember!

Supplements work best when taken regularly. Don't wait until "things get bad."

OTHER SUPPLEMENTS

For urinary urge or diarrhea: Prelief™ is an over-the-counter supplement that takes harsh acid out of urine (and feces) to help people who:

- Urinate too often (called urinary frequency)
- Or have sudden, compelling urges to urinate (called urinary urgency)
- Or have diarrhea

For menstrual pain: If menstrual flow is especially heavy—or is associated with severe menstrual cramps—talk to your gynecologist about how you can gain control of this monthly trigger. Taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) 24 hours prior to the onset of your period is often very beneficial for bad cramps and heavy menstrual flow. Birth control pills, or perhaps intrauterine devices (IUDs) that slowly release progesterone, are options that should be discussed with your gynecologist.



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PELVIC PAIN TRIGGERS

STOP PAIN FROM STARTING

Once you have identified a pain trigger that you know will be repetitive (for example, sexual intercourse), it is always best to initiate an intervention prior to the repetitive trigger, to halt the pain before it starts.

Interventions to prevent pain can include:

- ✓ Relaxation exercises
- ✓ Mindfulness meditation
- ✓ Muscle relaxers (or vaginal suppositories that contain muscle relaxers, such as valium or baclofen)



MEDICATIONS TO AVOID

There are certain medications that can worsen your pain disorder. You should try to avoid them or only use them very cautiously.

Medications that can worsen your pain include:

Stimulants:

Any medicines that would be considered a stimulant (such as Adderall) tend to make muscle pain worse. For some patients, decongestants will have a similar affect.

Cymbalta®:

While often prescribed for various pain disorders, approximately 5% of patients who use Cymbalta suffer from muscle spasms and musculoskeletal pain.¹ Thus pelvic pain symptoms—or voiding dysfunction—are possible drug side effects, especially at higher doses.

Narcotics:

Generally not very effective for muscle pain, narcotics have been shown to improve pain in about 65% of patients with interstitial cystitis.² Narcotics have also been shown to make the nerves that are involved in pain disorders become persistently hypersensitive.³

Get the most from your SoLá Therapy

PELVIC PAIN TRIGGERS

RELAX REGULARLY

Hopefully you will have access to a qualified pelvic floor physical therapist who can provide specialized therapy to help alleviate your painful pelvic muscle spasms. These specialists can also teach you pelvic stretching and relaxation methods.

Scan the QR code on the back cover to see our video demonstrations of key stretching and relaxation exercises. Compliance with these methods is essential to optimizing your results. You can also help keep your muscles relaxed with simple home therapies, including using a heating pad, or taking a nice hot bath.



Learning muscle awareness—and keeping your muscles relaxed through a regular program of exercise and relaxation techniques—cannot be overemphasized. Sticking with this type of program can make all the difference in the world.

Remember!

Muscles have memory. Once relaxed, hypertonic, tight, spastic muscles will try to go back to their tight, spastic state. However, continuing trigger avoidance, stretching, and relaxation exercises will prevent a return to a tight and painful state.

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PELVIC PAIN TRIGGERS

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PELVIC MUSCLE RELAXATION 101

WHAT ARE PELVIC MUSCLES?

Your pelvic floor muscles are a group of muscles located at the base of the pelvis (the lower part of the trunk of the body between the thighs and the abdomen). They attach to the tailbone, reach out toward the hips, and extend to the front of the pelvis near the pubic bone.

In addition to supporting the bladder, pelvic floor muscles also support:

- Urethra (a duct that allows urine to move out of the body)
- Vagina
- Rectum



HARD TO FEEL

As young children, we typically first learn how to control our pelvic floor muscles during toilet training. Unlike abdominal muscles, pelvic muscles are not easy for us to feel. For people with chronic pelvic pain (CPP), it is important to try to develop a conscious awareness of the pelvic muscles.

TIGHTNESS=TROUBLE

Pelvic floor muscles can become very painful if they are tightened for a period of time.

Pelvic muscles can often tighten as a result of:

- Stress
- Difficult vaginal birth delivery
- Gynecologic or other pelvic surgery
- Hemorrhoid surgery
- Straddle injury to the groin (example: falling onto a bicycle cross bar)



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PELVIC MUSCLE RELAXATION 101

OTHER PROBLEMS

Many people who cannot relax their pelvic muscles report a history of other chronic problems, such as:



- Urinary frequency (urinating too often)
- Urinary urgency (sudden, compelling urges to urinate)
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Chronic constipation



In women, another common symptom associated with pelvic muscle tightness is a burning discomfort at the opening of the vagina. This is often misdiagnosed—and mistreated—as a chronic yeast infection.

TIGHTNESS OVER TIME

Pelvic muscle contraction can become a subconscious habit, causing symptoms on a continual basis. Relaxation exercises and mindfulness meditation can help.

Get the most from your SoLá Therapy

PELVIC MUSCLE RELAXATION 101

RELAXATION THERAPY CAN HELP

There are some simple activities (called relaxation therapy) that can help you learn how to keep your muscles relaxed. These exercises, demonstrated in your free SoLá Therapy video series, will help you develop awareness of both muscle tension and muscle relaxation. This will help you re-establish normal pelvic muscle function and reduce pelvic pain. A simple exercise is provided below to help you get started.



Before you begin:

- ✓ Pick a quiet place where you can concentrate on your relaxation therapy without any noise or interruptions.
- ✓ Take warm baths to help aid your relaxation efforts, lying on your back in the bath with your knees up.
- ✓ Enjoy quiet, relaxed reading instead of watching television, which can be overstimulating.
- ✓ Try to get 8 to 9 hours of good sleep every night and take naps (if possible) during the day. Most people relax their pelvic muscles while sleeping. If necessary, your physician may give you medication to help you get a good, relaxed sleep (but only if your body needs it).
- ✓ Avoid wearing tight clothing, use of tampons, and sitting for more than 15 minutes at a time (particularly sitting on a hard seat or riding in a car for a long distance).

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PELVIC MUSCLE RELAXATION 101

Step 1

Place your hand in the vaginal area, with your middle finger resting on the surface of the skin between your vagina and your rectum. This is the easiest place to feel these muscles in action. Developing a mental awareness of the degree of muscle tension—and the ability to relax these muscles—are key to helping you successfully conquer your problem.

Step 2

In order to feel your pelvic muscles relax, pretend that you are relaxing your muscles to allow the passage of gas. There should be an obvious descent, or relaxation, that you will feel with your finger and become increasingly aware of.

Remember!

It is important that you do not bear down or strain to make your pelvic floor muscles descend. Simply allow them to relax on their own.

Step 3

Squeeze your muscles (known as a Kegel squeeze), which is the opposite of relaxation. As you squeeze, you should feel the area between your vagina and your rectum elevating, or pulling up inside you.

Remember!

Your emphasis should not be on improving your ability to squeeze your pelvic muscles, but rather your ability to relax your muscles. Only squeeze long enough to become aware of the muscle tension, then quickly and completely relax the muscles.

Step 4

Close your eyes, and imagine yourself walking down three steps. As you take each step:

1. Squeeze your pelvic muscles once on the first step.
2. Relax them three times on the second step.
3. On the third step, squeeze again and relax three more times.

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PELVIC MUSCLE RELAXATION 101

THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Your goal is to keep your muscles relaxed at all times during your daily activities. Throughout the day bring your awareness to your pelvic floor muscles. Often you will find they are tense without even realizing it. Consciously try to relax them when you notice them tightening.



PRACTICE BRINGS RESULTS

During the first few days, you may only be able to keep your pelvic muscles relaxed while lying down. With practice, you should be able to keep your muscles relaxed while standing and/or sitting. In the beginning, you may want to sit on a pillow to reduce pressure against your buttocks, but never use a rubber ring.

Remember!

Practicing muscle relaxation may not bring immediate relief, but it is an essential part of the treatment regimen that will maximize and help maintain the benefits of SoLá Therapy.

Break Free

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RELAX WITH MINDFULNESS

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

It is easy to become overwhelmed or “stressed out” by everything that is going on around us. Problems at work, financial worries, family issues, and health issues such as chronic pelvic pain (CPP) can throw us into a tailspin of muscle tension and fatigue. Mindfulness is a process of becoming aware of yourself and not allowing yourself to be overwhelmed by your surroundings.



HOW MINDFULNESS HELPS

The relationship between your mind and body is powerful. Achieving mindfulness can result in dramatic reduction of pain levels and improve your quality of life.



Studies have shown that people who follow a mindfulness program for only eight weeks can experience reduced pain and an improved quality of life for more than three years afterward.⁴

Get the most from your SoLá Therapy

RELAX WITH MINDFULNESS

HOW MINDFULNESS WORKS

Mindfulness can be achieved by very simple forms of meditation. There are many techniques for mindfulness meditation. Most only take about 10 minutes each day and can be practiced daily for the rest of your life. Below is one example to help you get started.

1

Find a place to relax

Find a quiet and comfortable place where you won't be disturbed by noises or people for at least 10 minutes. Turn off your phone and lie down if you can.

2

Focus on your body

Bring your attention to the parts of your body that are in contact with the surface you are laying on. Be aware of your body's position. Survey your entire body, noticing any areas that are not completely relaxed. Start with your toes—trying to relax each tight muscle. Next relax your ankles followed by your calf muscles. Slowly work your way up to your face.

3

Be in the moment

Become fully engaged in the present moment. If your mind wanders to thoughts of the past, or the future, redirect it back to the present. Focus on the feeling of your relaxed body, letting everything else drop away. Try to accept any area(s) of pain rather than viewing pain as your enemy.

Get the most from your SoLá Therapy

RELAX WITH MINDFULNESS

4 Use your imagination

Imagine yourself wading into a warm pool. Feel the relaxing warmth as you enter one foot into the pool. You can control how quickly the warm water rises from your ankles to your thighs, and from your stomach to your shoulders. Also imagine a soothing breeze gently caressing your face.

5 Achieve awareness

The final step is to become aware of your body as a connected whole. You will know you have achieved awareness when your body feels relaxed and as one (in other words, you are not focused on any one body part). Stay in this relaxed state as long as you can, at least for a few minutes. After the meditation, try to remain mindful throughout your day and avoid pain triggers.

Remember!

Mindfulness is a process that takes practice and becomes easier over time.

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RELAX WITH MINDFULNESS

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YOUR DIET MATTERS

Did you know that certain foods and drinks can actually contribute to bladder symptoms and CPP? Making simple changes to your diet can help. Pay special attention to common problem foods and drinks, and as a general rule, avoid spicy and acidic foods.



These lists are not all-inclusive. Using them as a guide, however, can help improve overall bladder health and comfort.

	FOODS/DRINKS TO AVOID	OK TO EAT/DRINK
BEVERAGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Alcoholic drinks X Carbonated drinks (i.e., sodas, tonics, and seltzers) X Spicy foods X Citrus fruit juices X All caffeinated drinks, including coffee and tea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Water or flavored water (avoid artificial sweeteners) ✓ Milk ✓ Chamomile or peppermint tea ✓ Low acidity coffee
PROTEINS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Smoked fishes and meats X Cold cuts X Beans (fava, lentil, black, lima, kidney, soy) X Tofu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Poultry (chicken, turkey) ✓ Seafood ✓ Fresh meats (beef, pork)
DAIRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Cheeses to avoid: smoked gouda, provolone, parmesan, brie, swiss, jarslsberg, blue, monterey jack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Cheeses ok to eat: american, cheddar, mozzarella, feta, ricotta, cream cheese, cottage cheese, string cheese ✓ Ice cream ✓ Whipped cream ✓ Milk ✓ Yogurt ✓ Mayonnaise

Get the most from your SoLá Therapy

YOUR DIET MATTERS

	FOODS/DRINKS TO AVOID	OK TO EAT/DRINK
NUTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">X WalnutsX PecansX Brazil nutsX Macadamia nutsX PistachiosX Hazelnuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Cashews✓ Almonds✓ Pine nuts✓ Peanuts
VEGETABLES & FRUITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">X TomatoesX Chile peppersX OnionsX Most fruits (especially citrus fruits and cranberries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Most vegetables✓ Apples (Gala, Pink Lady, Fuji)✓ Blueberries✓ Pears✓ Coconut
GRAINS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">X Rye bread	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Most breads, including whole-grain, corn, potato, white and oat✓ Cereals (including oat and rice)✓ Rice✓ Pasta
DESSERTS & SNACKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">X ChocolateX Anything with artificial sweeteners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ White chocolate✓ Most snacks
CONDIMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">X Sugar substitutesX VinegarX Soy sauce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Any other condiments✓ Fructose (as found in Superose®) is a safe sugar substitute and may be used freely

Get the most from your SoLá Therapy

YOUR DIET MATTERS

Helpful Tips

IF YOU'RE A COFFEE LOVER

You can find multiple sellers of low-acid coffee online. Also, consider buying a Toddy® Cold Brew System, a coffee-making device that uses cold water to extract coffee flavor from coffee beans, without caffeine or acid.



IF YOU CANNOT COMPLETELY AVOID ACIDIC FOODS OR DRINKS

Prelief® is an over-the-counter antacid that neutralizes urinary acid. You can take 2 tablets at a time when consuming acidic foods or drinks.

Remember!

A change in diet can make a difference for people with bladder symptoms.

Break Free

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**MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SOLÁ
THERAPY TREATMENT.**

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