

OSF HealthCare offers non-surgical solution for pelvic floor disorders

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ALTON - A recent study funded by the National Institute of Health found that nearly one quarter of American women suffer with one or more pelvic floor disorders, which include a range of health problems that can cause physical discomfort and limit activity.



The stereotype is that pelvic floor disorder is an older person's problem. Rachel Williams, a physical therapist at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center, says while pelvic floor disorders are more prevalent in the elderly, problems can develop at any age.

“Many believe that incontinence is only an elderly diagnosis and the only diagnosis that is treated,” said Williams. “Besides incontinence, there are many others that may benefit from pelvic floor therapy, including pregnant and post-partum women, patients with symptoms of pelvic pain, constipation, prolapse, and many others, both female and male.”

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles that form a hammock across the pelvic opening. Normally, these muscles keep the pelvic organs secure, but when an organ drops from its normal placement, a patient’s quality of life can be severely disrupted.

“Pelvic floor disorders can cause a number of quality of life issues, including an inability to participate in day-to-day tasks, sexual dysfunctions, sleep problems, emotional health issues and an overall feeling of frustration. These are just a few examples. It’s really wide-ranging,” said Williams.

When patients suffer from a pelvic floor disorder, many think they just have to live with the issue, or have surgery to manage it. However, a new program at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony’s Health Center is offering treatment that does not involve surgery or drugs.

Pelvic floor physical therapy is now being offered at OSF Saint Anthony’s Health Center by Williams. She has been trained to provide pelvic floor rehabilitation by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA).

“The goals for patients going through pelvic floor physical therapy is similar to any physical therapy patient. Our goal is always to improve their overall function,” explained Williams. “For example, some specific goals may be decreasing leakage of urine or feces, decreasing pain in order to allow for normalized function, decreasing the amount of restroom breaks, and of course, improving a patient’s quality of life.”

She added, “Pelvic floor PT can help a number of people. If you have a question, it is always important to speak to your physician and consider whether pelvic floor PT could benefit you.”

Pelvic floor physical therapy involves muscle training, biofeedback, behavior modification, manual therapy and exercises for the muscles of the pelvis. After an initial assessment in a private room, patients generally can expect weekly treatment sessions, but the best schedule for improvement will be determined on a case-by-case basis. For more information about pelvic floor physical therapy call (618) 463-5171.