

Pudendal Neuralgia

What is it?

Pudendal neuralgia is pain in one or more of the areas innervated by the pudendal nerve or one of its branches which include the rectum, anus, urethra, perineum, and genital area. In women this includes the clitoris, mons pubis, vulva, lower 1/3 of the vagina, and labia. In men this includes the penis and scrotum. Often pain is referred to nearby areas in the pelvis. Typically pain gets worse as the day progresses and is worse with sitting. Without treatment, over time there may be a progressive worsening of symptoms starting with a small amount of perineal discomfort that develops into a chronic and constant state of pain that does not decrease even when standing or lying down.

Possible Causes of PN

There are numerous possible causes for pudendal neuropathy include: inflammatory or autoimmune illness, frequent infections, tension on the nerve, a nerve entrapment similar to carpal tunnel syndrome, or trauma to the nerve from an accident/fall, exercise, childbirth, prolonged sitting, or surgery. Sometimes there is no apparent explanation.

Pelvic surgery such as a hysterectomy may trigger pudendal neuralgia even though the nerve was not touched directly.

Possible Symptoms

- Sitting becomes intolerable
- Pain is often lower in the morning upon awakening and increases throughout the day
- Pain in perineum
- Pain after orgasm and possible difficulty achieving orgasm
- Intolerance to tight pants or elastic bands around the legs
- Friction and feeling of inflammation when walking for too long or running
- Problem with urinary retention after urination. Need to push to empty bladder.
- Urethral burning with or after urination
- Urinary frequency
- Pain after bowel movement and/or constipation

What can be done?

Pelvic floor physical therapy along with lifestyle changes can help to improve pudendal pain. Examples of lifestyle changes include: avoiding sitting for long periods of time, avoid activities that include a lot of bending, manage constipation to reduce pushing, and reduce exercises such as biking that cause pudendal pain to increase.