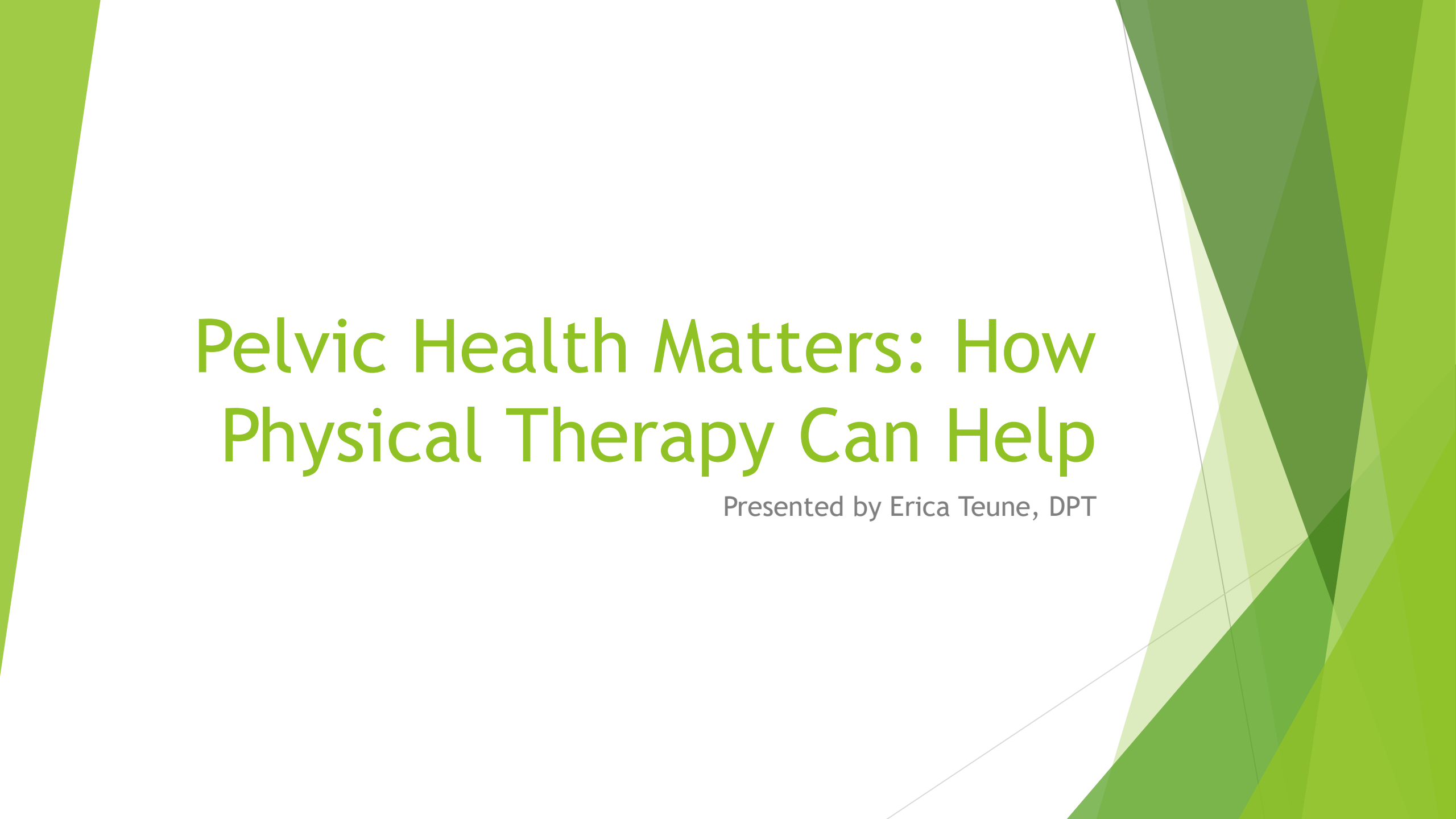


The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern and dynamic visual effect.

Pelvic Health Matters: How Physical Therapy Can Help

Presented by Erica Teune, DPT

A Little About Me

- ▶ Originally from the Pittsburgh area
- ▶ I did my undergraduate and doctorate degrees at Duquesne University
- ▶ I moved to VA in 2012 and have worked my whole career for this organization
- ▶ I am married with 2 daughters
- ▶ We love to spend our free time out on Lake Anna

My Interest in Pelvic Health



Bladder Health Quiz (True or False)

- ▶ It's normal to leak urine after having children or with aging
- ▶ Going to the bathroom “just in case” is a healthy habit
- ▶ Most healthy adults urinate 6-8 times a day on average
- ▶ Getting up more than once a night to urinate is normal
- ▶ Everyone with bladder leakage should just do more kegels
- ▶ Constipation can contribute to bladder problems
- ▶ Pelvic floor therapists only treat post-partum women

Pelvic Floor Muscles

- ▶ Three layers
 - ▶ Superficial Layer: supports the openings, contributes to continence and sexual function
 - ▶ Middle Layer: supports the urethra specifically, assists with urinary continence
 - ▶ Deep Layer: primary support for the pelvic organs (bladder, uterus/prostate, rectum), assists with continence and contributes to core stability and pressure management

Pelvic Floor Muscles

- Think of it like a three-layer hammock: the top/deep layer provides the most support, the middle layer helps control the flow of urine, and the outer layer surrounds the openings and assists with bladder, bowel, and sexual function



Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

- ▶ Pelvic floor issues are common, but should not be considered a “normal” part of aging or something you should simply accept and ignore
- ▶ Many pelvic floor conditions can be addressed and improved with physical therapy

Risk Factors

- ▶ Age-related muscle weakness
- ▶ Pregnancy and childbirth history
- ▶ Menopause and hormonal changes
- ▶ Prostate issues or surgery in men
- ▶ Chronic coughing
- ▶ Obesity
- ▶ Constipation and straining
- ▶ Heavy lifting

Common Pelvic Health Concerns

- ▶ Urinary leakage (stress, urge, overflow, or mixed incontinence)
- ▶ Frequent urination, or getting up multiple times at night to void
- ▶ Bowel urgency, constipation, or leakage
- ▶ Pelvic organ prolapse
- ▶ Pelvic, hip, low back, or tailbone pain
- ▶ Sexual health concerns related to the pelvic floor

Urinary Leakage

► Stress Incontinence

- Defined by an involuntary leakage of urine during activities that increase pressure in the abdomen
- Common triggers can include:
 - Coughing
 - Sneezing
 - Running/jumping/other high impact activities
 - Lifting heavy objects

Urinary Leakage

▶ Urge Incontinence

- ▶ Defined by the involuntary loss of urine (leakage or a more substantial amount) associated with a sudden, strong urge to urinate that is difficult to delay
- ▶ Often related to an overactive bladder
- ▶ Leakage will often occur on the way to the bathroom
- ▶ Feeling unable to “hold it” after experience a sudden, intense urge to void

Urinary Leakage

▶ Urge Incontinence

▶ Common triggers can include:

- ▶ Hearing running water
- ▶ Arriving home (AKA “key-in-door”)
- ▶ Standing up from a seated position
- ▶ Drinking liquids that irritate the bladder (such as coffee, tea, soda, alcohol)

Urinary Leakage

- ▶ Overflow Incontinence
 - ▶ Defined by an involuntary leakage of urine caused by an over-filled bladder that does not fully empty
- ▶ Common signs:
 - ▶ Frequent or constant dribbling of urine
 - ▶ Feeling as though the bladder does not fully empty
 - ▶ Difficulty initiating a urine stream
 - ▶ Weak urine stream
 - ▶ Urinary frequency, but only a small amount of urine is passed
 - ▶ Still feeling an urge to urinate shortly after urinating

Mixed Urinary Incontinence

- ▶ Typically associated with a mix of stress and urge incontinence
- ▶ Leakage may occur during activities that increase abdominal pressure as well as with a sudden, intense urge to urinate

Bowel Incontinence

- ▶ The accidental loss of stool or gas due to difficulty controlling bowel movements
- ▶ If there is no medical reason for these symptoms, the cause is usually a dysfunction of the pelvic floor muscles or anal sphincter

Pelvic Organ Prolapse

- ▶ Defined by the descent or bulging of one or more pelvic organs into or through the vaginal canal due to weakness or loss of support from the pelvic floor muscles
- ▶ Common Types:
 - ▶ Cystocele (bladder)
 - ▶ Rectocele (rectum)
 - ▶ Uterine

Pelvic Organ Prolapse

- ▶ Common Symptoms:
 - ▶ A feeling of pressure, heaviness, or bulging
 - ▶ A sensation that something is “falling out”
 - ▶ Difficulty fully emptying the bladder or bowel
 - ▶ Urinary leakage or frequency
 - ▶ Discomfort with activity

Pelvic Organ Prolapse

► Medical Treatments:

- Vaginal estrogen
- Pessaries
- Surgery
 - Could include repairing of the weakened pelvic floor tissues or placing physical support to the organs

Pelvic Pain

- ▶ Discomfort in the pelvic region that can come from muscles, nerves, or pelvic organs
- ▶ Causes include (but are not limited to)
 - ▶ Pelvic floor muscle dysfunction (weakness, tightness, or decreased coordination)
 - ▶ Muscle spasms or trigger points
 - ▶ Nerve irritation (typically the pudendal nerve)
 - ▶ Bladder or bowel conditions
 - ▶ Gynecologic conditions (i.e. endometriosis, adenomyosis, infections, etc)

Pelvic Pain

- ▶ Common Symptoms:
 - ▶ Aching, sharp, burning pain or pressure in the pelvic area
 - ▶ Pain with sitting
 - ▶ Pain with urination or bowel movements
 - ▶ Pain with activity
 - ▶ Difficulty relaxing the pelvic muscles

What a PT Assessment May Look Like

- ▶ Subjective history
- ▶ Objective assessment
 - ▶ Screening of lumbar spine and hips including core and hip girdle strength
 - ▶ Potentially an internal assessment
- ▶ Education on findings
- ▶ Education on where we go from there

How PT Can Help

- ▶ Education:
 - ▶ Stress incontinence management
 - ▶ “the knack”
 - ▶ Urge incontinence management
 - ▶ Urge-delaying techniques
 - ▶ Stop moving or sit down if able
 - ▶ Take slow, diaphragmatic breaths
 - ▶ Perform 5-10 quick pelvic floor contractions
 - ▶ Use mental distractions
 - ▶ Wiggle your toes or do some heel raises

How PT Can Help

- From there, an individualized exercise program is designed for you



How PT Can Help

- ▶ Exercises are prescribed based on your individual needs and goals
- ▶ Generally speaking, these will include:
 - ▶ Learning how to activate and relax your pelvic floor
 - ▶ Diaphragmatic (or “belly”) breathing
 - ▶ Core strengthening

How PT Can Help

- ▶ When contracting the pelvic floor, a cue I will often give is thinking of trying to stop the flow of urine
 - ▶ Ideally, one will learn to isolate these muscles without activating any other surrounding muscles
 - ▶ This should be able to be done without holding your breath
 - ▶ The contraction itself can be coordinated with exhaling

How PT Can Help

- ▶ When relaxing your pelvic floor, think of the opposite of contracting (i.e. releasing the flow of urine)
 - ▶ A cue I will often use for this is lowering down an elevator and opening the door on the bottom floor
 - ▶ This can be coordinated with inhaling
 - ▶ Should not be associated with bearing down

How PT Can Help

- ▶ Diaphragmatic Breathing
 - ▶ Promotes pelvic floor relaxation
 - ▶ Decreases muscle tension/guarding
 - ▶ Improves coordination between the diaphragm, abdominal muscles, and pelvic floor
 - ▶ Can promote overall relaxation and stress reduction



How PT Can Help

- ▶ Diaphragmatic Breathing
 - ▶ Often taught in supine (or lying on your back) with a hand on your belly
 - ▶ As you inhale, you should feel your belly expand into your hand as your pelvic floor relaxes
 - ▶ As you exhale, draw your belly button in towards your spine and contract your pelvic floor
 - ▶ Exhaling through pursed lips can be helpful
 - ▶ This can be beneficial for abdominal and rib mobility, as well as aid in bowel movements and reduce urinary urgency

How PT Can Help

- ▶ Core Strengthening
 - ▶ Goal of targeting the deep core stabilizing muscles
 - ▶ Learn how to properly activate the core
 - ▶ Translate that to daily, functional activities



Protect Your Pelvic Floor

- ▶ Some examples of things to avoid/modify to protect your pelvic floor:
 - ▶ Holding your breath during lifting activities
 - ▶ Straining on the commode
 - ▶ “Hovering” over toilet seats
 - ▶ Chronic coughing
 - ▶ Excessive caffeine, alcohol, or carbonated beverages (aka “bladder irritants”)

Protect Your Pelvic Floor

- ▶ Pelvic floor-friendly habits:
 - ▶ Breathe normally during exertion or lifting
 - ▶ Stay hydrated and eat plenty of fiber to prevent constipation
 - ▶ Maintain regular physical activity and a healthy weight
 - ▶ Practice diaphragmatic breathing
 - ▶ Seek out a pelvic floor therapist



Where to Seek Help Around Here

- ▶ I'm at Meadowbrook
- ▶ We have two therapists here at Powell
- ▶ And one therapist at our Madison location

