

If you have any of the conditions listed above or have any concerns about the risks involved with the examination, please discuss these with your physiotherapist.

If you need to change your appointment or request a chaperone, please contact us:

Tel: 01932 722547

Email: asp-tr.stpetersphysioappointments@nhs.net

Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Senior Physiotherapist. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01932 723553 or email asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net. If you remain concerned, PALS can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

Author: Pelvic Health Physiotherapy Team. **Department:** Pelvic Health Physiotherapy

Version: 5

Published: July 2021

Review: July 2024

We can provide interpreters for a variety of languages, information in larger print or other formats (e.g. audio) - please call us on 01932 723553.



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Anorectal and Vaginal Examinations Pelvic Health Physiotherapy

This leaflet is intended to answer any questions that you may have regarding your pelvic floor examination which may include a vaginal or rectal examination. It is not, however intended to replace discussion with your Physiotherapist.

Why may a physiotherapist need to perform an anorectal or vaginal examination?

As part of the physiotherapy assessment it may be necessary to perform an anal or vaginal examination. This will be to assess pelvic floor muscle function, assess for pelvic organ prolapse and screen for any other conditions that may be related to your symptoms.

The staff member who undertakes this examination should discuss the reasons with you in more detail prior to your assessment. All of our pelvic health physiotherapists who undertake vaginal and / or rectal examinations have been specially trained to do this and they are also trained to maintain your hygiene, safety, dignity and confidence. An internal examination in this manner is often not painful but if you do experience pain you should inform your physiotherapist.

Can I have another person with me in the examination?

If you wish to have a chaperone present for your examination then this can be arranged in advance with the physiotherapist – please let them know before your appointment. If this is not possible the examination can be booked for a future appointment date when a second physiotherapist can be on hand to act as chaperone. Relatives/friends cannot be considered as chaperones but you are welcome to bring them along to your appointment if you wish.

What does the examination involve?

You will be examined behind a closed/lockable door. The physiotherapist will allow you time to undress in private, you will be asked to lay on your back or side (depending on which examination is to be performed). The therapist will complete all or some of the following in the assessment:

- Look at the tissues to detect any soreness, dryness, scar tissue and muscle movement.
- Lightly touch the external skin to check the sensation of the genital area.
- Gently insert 1 finger into the anus or vagina to check for any condition that may be impacting your symptoms and / or treatment.
- You may be asked to tighten your pelvic floor muscles a few times to check strength and function. If you do not know how to do this, you will be taught in the examination.
- You may be asked to cough and to bear down (push) to check for prolapse and muscle coordination.

What happens after the examination?

You will be given time to get changed in private. You will then have a conversation with the physiotherapist who will explain the findings of the examination and how this impacts your treatment.

Your consent, muscle power and any other findings will be recorded in your treatment notes. The names of the physiotherapist and any student or chaperone present are also recorded.

Can I say no?

The examination is not compulsory and you can say no and can always change your mind after making your decision. During the examination you can ask the physiotherapist to stop at any time.

If you do not wish to complete an intimate examination your physiotherapist can try to find alternative ways for you to assess your own muscle function. It is important to understand that these alternatives are often not conclusive and may make diagnosis and successful resolution of symptoms more difficult.

Are there any reasons why I cannot have an ano-rectal or vaginal examination?

Some patients may be asked to wait a bit longer or extra considerations may be taken before completing their ano-rectal or vaginal assessment. If any of the following apply to you please inform your physiotherapist so you can have further discussion about the examination:

- Inflammation or infection of the vagina or the anus.
- Have undergone pelvic or bowel surgery in the last 6 -12 weeks
- Have delivered a baby in the last 6 weeks
- Previous bad experiences with examinations
- Have experienced sexual abuse
- During pregnancy where any of the following apply:
 - Have been advised to avoid sexual intercourse
 - Have vaginal bleeding
 - Are under 12 weeks pregnant
 - Have a cervical suture in place