

**What to Expect In Physiotherapy as part of the Multidisciplinary Vulvodynia Program:**

If appropriate each participant in the MV program will have access to three physiotherapy sessions, the goal of which is to help you learn about your pelvic floor. Where it is, what it does, and how to get it to do what you want it to do, when you want it to do it. This usually involves learning how to relax the muscle.

For many women that have vaginal pain, the pelvic floor muscle has increased tension, part of a learned protective guarding response against painful contact at the vaginal opening. In physiotherapy, you will first learn how to relax the pelvic floor muscles both with and without something touching the vagina. Specific learning tools are used such as biofeedback and vaginal inserts, or accommodators.

Biofeedback senses how much tension is in the pelvic floor muscle. The technology works the same as a heart monitor. When the heart is monitored, electrodes on the chest detect heart (a muscle) activity and the information is displayed on a graph on the heart monitor screen. The person only feels the electrodes being placed and removed. Pelvic floor biofeedback works much the same way. During pelvic floor biofeedback three electrodes are placed on the skin, two on either side of the anus very close to the opening, while the third electrode is placed on the inner thigh. The electrodes do not go in or touch the area immediately around the vagina. The biofeedback doesn't provide any electrical output to the patient (It doesn't zap you!). It simply reads the amount of muscle activity occurring in any given moment. The computer processes this information and a graph as displayed demonstrating the muscle activity. Biofeedback is a helpful tool in learning to control both contracting and relaxing your pelvic floor muscles.

Vaginal accommodators are a set of wax inserts of gradually increasing diameter. Once you have some ability to control both contracting and relaxing your pelvic floor muscle, you may choose to use the accommodators to learn how to have something in your vagina without having pain, starting at the smaller sizes and progressing to larger ones as able. This provides an opportunity to acquire skills and confidence in painfree vaginal activity.

Program participants are required to pay for electrodes and must purchase their own set of the accommodators. Accommodators are approximately \$60 and can be purchased at Laurel Prescriptions (102 – 888 W. 8th Ave). The pharmacy is at the corner of Laurel Street, one block east of Oak St. (604-873-5511). Most women benefit from the use of accommodators. If you are not sure if you want to use them or will need them, wait until your first physiotherapy appointment before purchasing. If you already own a set, bring them to your physiotherapy appointment.

Unfortunately, due to scheduling and budgetary reasons, it may be difficult to reschedule physiotherapy appointments. **Missed appointments cannot be rescheduled or made up.**