

## Pelvic Pain

Pain that is located below the navel and down to the hips is known as pelvic pain. While anyone can have this type of pain, the term “pelvic pain” usually refers to female pelvic pain. Pelvic pain may be due to a variety of conditions. Your doctor may use blood tests and medical imaging tests to locate your pelvic pain and determine what is causing it. Treatment will depend on the underlying cause.

### What is pelvic pain?

Pelvic pain is pain in the area between the hips and below the navel. Pelvic pain may be experienced by anyone. However, the term “pelvic pain” is most commonly used to refer to female pelvic pain that affects the pelvic bones, soft tissues, and/or pelvic organs. Pelvic pain may be due to common conditions, such as menstruation, or may signal disease, infection, or abnormalities such as:

- Appendicitis (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/appendicitis>)
- Urinary tract infections
- Sexually transmitted disease (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org>)
- Kidney or bladder stones (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/stones-renal>)
- Diverticulitis (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/diverticulitis>) or colitis
- Ectopic pregnancy (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org>)
- Ovarian torsion
- Fibroids (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org>)
- Endometriosis (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/endometriosis>)
- Pelvic floor dysfunction
- Cancer



### How is pelvic pain diagnosed and evaluated?

Your doctor may use blood and lab tests as well as imaging tests to diagnose the cause of your pelvic pain. Imaging tests may include:

- Abdominal X-ray (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/abdominrad>) uses a tiny dose of ionizing radiation to produce pictures of the inside of the abdominal cavity. It is mainly used to assess dilatation of the gastrointestinal tract. Abdominal x-ray's speed and ease of use make it useful in emergency diagnosis and treatment. Some providers may refer to an abdominal x-ray by using the dated name “KUB,” which stands for kidneys, ureters, and bladder.
- Abdominal & Pelvic CT (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/abdominct>) is useful in identifying kidney stones, their related complications, and other causes of abdominal pain such as appendicitis and diverticulitis. It is also useful in assessing a wide variety of cancers involving abdominal or pelvic organs. CT scanning is fast, painless, noninvasive, and accurate. In emergency cases, it can reveal internal injuries and bleeding quickly enough to help save lives.

- Abdominal Ultrasound (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/abdominus>) produces pictures of the structures within the upper abdomen. It is used to help diagnose pain and evaluate the kidneys, liver, gallbladder, bile ducts, pancreas, spleen, and abdominal aorta. Ultrasound is safe, noninvasive and does not use ionizing radiation.
- Pelvic Ultrasound (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/pelvis>) produces pictures of the structures within the lower abdomen and pelvis. There are three types of pelvic ultrasound: transabdominal, transvaginal (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org>), and transrectal (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org>). These exams evaluate the reproductive and urinary systems. Doctors perform transvaginal ultrasound very much like a gynecologic exam. The doctor will insert the transducer into the vagina (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org>) after you empty your bladder. The tip of the transducer is smaller than a standard speculum (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org>). The doctor places a protective cover over the transducer, lubricates it, and inserts the transducer into the vagina. Transvaginal ultrasound typically provides the highest quality images of the uterus and ovaries but can be difficult to tolerate for some women and may also be challenging in young women (especially those that have never had a speculum exam, transvaginal intercourse, or used a tampon).
- Pelvic Floor MRI (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/dynamic-pelvic-floor-mri>) produces pictures of the pelvic floor, a network of muscles that stretches between the public bone and the spine as well as the abdominal organs it supports. Pelvic Floor MRI is useful in diagnosing pelvic floor disorders such as organ prolapse, incontinence, pelvic pain, and constipation.

## How is pelvic pain treated?

Treatment of pelvic pain will depend on the underlying cause. If kidney or bladder stones are the cause, you may need urology treatment. If your doctor suspects cancer, you may need a biopsy. Cancer treatments may include chemotherapy (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org>), surgery or radiation therapy. (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org>)

## Which test, procedure or treatment is best for me?

- *Acute Pelvic Pain in the Reproductive Age Group* (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/acs-acute-pelvic-pain-reproductive-age>)
- Postmenopausal Acute Pelvic Pain (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/acs-postmenopausal-acute-pelvic-pain>)
- *Pelvic Floor Dysfunction in Female Patients* (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/acs-pelvic-floor-dysfunction-in-females>)
- Fibroids (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/acs-fibroids>)
- Second and Third Trimester Vaginal Bleeding (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/acs-second-and-third-trimester-vaginal-bleeding>)

## Disclaimer

This information is copied from the RadiologyInfo Web site (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org>) which is dedicated to providing the highest quality information. To ensure that, each section is reviewed by a physician with expertise in the area presented. All information contained in the Web site is further reviewed by an ACR (American College of Radiology) - RSNA (Radiological Society of North America) committee, comprising physicians with expertise in several radiologic areas.

However, it is not possible to assure that this Web site contains complete, up-to-date information on any particular subject. Therefore, ACR and RSNA make no representations or warranties about the suitability of this information for use for any particular purpose. All information is provided "as is" without express or implied warranty.

Please visit the RadiologyInfo Web site at <http://www.radiologyinfo.org> to view or download the latest information.

**Note:** Images may be shown for illustrative purposes. Do not attempt to draw conclusions or make diagnoses by comparing these images to other medical images, particularly your own. Only qualified physicians should interpret images; the radiologist is the physician expert trained in medical imaging.

## Copyright

This material is copyrighted by either the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), 820 Jorie Boulevard, Oak Brook, IL 60523-2251 or the American College of Radiology (ACR), 1891 Preston White Drive, Reston, VA 20191-4397. Commercial reproduction or multiple

distribution by any traditional or electronically based reproduction/publication method is prohibited.

Copyright © 2026 Radiological Society of North America, Inc.