



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER™ Jenna Welch Women's Center

Welcome to the Jenna Welch Women's Center Chronic Pelvic Pain Clinic. We would like to thank you for choosing us for your women's health needs. It is our goal to give you the answers and effective treatment you have been seeking for your chronic pain. Below are just a few informational points about chronic pelvic pain and what to expect during your visit.

- ❖ Pain in the pelvic area that lasts for 6 months or longer is called chronic pelvic pain. An estimated 15-20% of women aged 18-50 years have chronic pelvic pain that has lasted for more than 1 year. Chronic pain can come and go, or it can be constant. It can occur at any time including during menstruation, before and after eating, while urinating, or during sex.
- ❖ Chronic pelvic pain can be caused by a variety of conditions. Some of these conditions may not be related to the reproductive organs but to the urinary tract or bowel. Some women have more than one condition that might be the cause of their pain.
- ❖ There are many physical causes of chronic pelvic pain that should be considered including infection of the reproductive organs, painful menstrual cramping, endometriosis or the growth of uterus lining tissue elsewhere in the body, non-cancerous tumors, and urinary tract, digestive system, or musculoskeletal problems.
- ❖ There also appears to be a link between chronic pelvic pain and sexual or physical abuse. About one half of all women with chronic pelvic pain have a history of abuse. Depression also appears to be a complicating factor although it is rarely the sole cause of chronic pelvic pain.
- ❖ For some women with chronic pelvic pain, no cause is found. Not finding a cause does not mean that the pain is not real. Experts agree that with pelvic pain, it is not always possible to pinpoint a specific cause.
- ❖ One type of pelvic pain is called vulvodynia. This condition involves chronic pain and discomfort of the vulva. The pain is long lasting, recurrent, and can be generalized or localized to one specific area. Even though a woman feels pain, the vulva often looks normal. Symptoms can include burning, stinging, rawness, itching, aching, throbbing, and swelling.
- ❖ Vulvodynia can be the result of one or more factors including infections, genetic factors, pelvic muscle spasms, allergies to chemicals, hormonal changes, damage or irritation of the nerves of the vulva, and overuse of topical medications.
- ❖ Vulvodynia and chronic pelvic pain can disrupt a woman's daily life, making it hard to work or be active. Dealing with pain on a long-term basis can cause mental health problems, such as low self-esteem, anxiety, or depression. Emotions and stress also can play a role in how pain is felt and coped with.
- ❖ During your visit, we will ask you about the degree and location of your pain. You also will be asked about your medical and sexual history, including questions about pregnancies, lifestyle, medications, and any physical, sexual, or mental abuse. You may be asked to keep a journal describing the pain. The tests you will have will depend on your symptoms and pelvic exam results. You also may have lab tests, such as tests of your blood or other tissue.
- ❖ If the cause of the pain is found, it is treated. If a cause is not known, treatment focuses on pain relief. It is important not to give up on treatment if a cause is not found. Some treatments may take a few months for any relief to be noticed.
- ❖ There are many ways to decrease or relieve pain or to avoid making it worse including medications, physical therapy, nutritional therapy, counseling, and surgery. Because different triggers may provoke each woman's symptoms, pay close attention to what makes yours feel worse and avoid those triggers. Working together, we can find the treatment that works best for you.
- ❖ For more information on chronic pelvic pain, please visit the National Vulvodynia Association at www.nva.org/ or the International Pelvic Pain Society at www.pelvicpain.org/.

We look forward to visiting with you. If you are a self-pay patient, please review the attached handout for payment information. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns at:

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