



What is a Urogynecologist?

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A urogynecologist is an obstetrician/gynecologist who has specialized in the care of women with pelvic floor disorder. The pelvic floor is the muscles, ligaments, connective tissue and nerves that help support and control the rectum, uterus, vagina and bladder. The pelvic floor can be damaged by childbirth, repeated heavy lifting, chronic disease or surgery.

Some problems due to pelvic floor disorder and their symptoms are:

1. Incontinence: loss of bladder or bowel control, leakage of urine or feces.
2. Prolapse: descent of pelvic organs; a bulge and/or pressure; 'dropped uterus, bladder, vagina or rectum.'
3. Emptying Disorders: difficulty urinating or moving bowels.
4. Pelvic (or Bladder) Pain: discomfort, burning or other uncomfortable pelvic symptoms, including bladder or urethral pain.
5. Overactive Bladder: frequent need to void, bladder pressure, urgency, urgency incontinence or difficulty holding back a full bladder.

What Kind of Training Does a Urogynecologist Have?

Urogynecologists have completed medical school and a four-year residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology. These doctors become specialists with additional training and experience in the evaluation and treatment of conditions that affect the female pelvic organs, and the muscles and connective tissue that support the organs. The additional training focuses on the surgical and non-surgical treatment of non-cancerous gynecologic problems.



When Should I See a Urogynecologist?

Although your primary care physician or OB/GYN may have knowledge about these problems, a urogynecologist can offer additional expertise. You should see (or be referred to) a urogynecologist when you have problems of prolapse, and/or troublesome incontinence or when your primary doctor recommends consultation. Other problems for which you or your doctor might think about consulting a urogynecologist include: problems with emptying the bladder or rectum, pelvic pain and the need for special expertise in vaginal surgery.

What Treatment Options are Available from a Urogynecologist?

A urogynecologist can recommend a variety of therapies to cure or relieve symptoms of prolapse, urinary or fecal incontinence, or other pelvic floor dysfunction symptoms. He or she may advise conservative (non-surgical) or surgical therapy depending on your wishes, the severity of your condition and your general health. Conservative options include medications, pelvic exercises, behavioral and/or dietary modifications and vaginal devices (also called pessaries). Biofeedback and Electric Stimulation are two newer treatment modalities that your urogynecologist may recommend. Safe and effective surgical procedures are also utilized by the urogynecologist to treat incontinence and prolapse. He or she will discuss all of the options that are available to treat your specific problem(s) before you are asked to make a treatment decision.



How Do I Find a Urogynecologist?

If you believe that a urogynecologist is the right specialist for you, ask your primary care physician for a referral or contact your hospital's referral service for recommendations of urogynecologists in your local area. Various Web sites provide information to women about urinary incontinence and pelvic prolapse problems. You are welcome to contact the American Urogynecologic Society (AUGS) directly. AUGS will be happy to provide you with a list of members in your area, or visit the AUGS Web site to locate a urogynecologist near you. AUGS can be reached at:

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It is not a normal part of a woman's aging process to develop uncomfortable, troublesome symptoms of incontinence or prolapse. Women need not 'learn to live with it.' Effective help is available through the services of a urogynecologist.