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## The Most Recent Systematic Review on Muscle Training and Pregnant and Postnatal Incontinence

Pelvic floor muscle training (PFMT) has been proven effective for the treatment of both urinary and fecal incontinence. However, because of the physical demands associated with pregnancy, many researchers have studied PFMT for pregnant and postnatal women as a separate issue. Not all pregnant or postnatal PFMT studies have found their programs to be sufficiently effective. Recently, the *Cochrane Database* published the most definitive systematic review on the subject to date.



Hay-Smith et al. performed a systematic review which ultimately included 15 trials involving a total of 6,181 women.<sup>1</sup> They compared various PFMT programs to usual antenatal or postnatal care. They concluded that pelvic floor muscle training could be recommended as a prenatal program to prevent incontinence and/or as a postnatal program to correct incontinence, both urinary and fecal. PFMT reduced the likelihood of urinary incontinence (UI) in late pregnancy by 56%. Antenatal PFMT reduced the chance of UI within 6 months postpartum by 30%. Women who experienced postnatal incontinence and who received postnatal PFMT proved 56% less likely to have fecal incontinence at 12 months and 20% less likely to have UI.

The positive results reported by this systematic review are likely to be understated. In commentary published this past March, Dr. Kari Bo points out the heterogeneous nature of the pelvic floor muscle training programs used in the 15 studies.<sup>2</sup> Some of the larger studies included had low levels of PFMT guidance and showed smaller effects. Other, smaller studies included in the analysis had more intensive programs and individually showed a cure rate of 70% or greater. Hays-Smith and colleagues did note that the data suggests a dose-response relationship. PFMT programs including one to one instruction, checking for correct contraction, continued supervision of training, or greater exercise frequency demonstrated greater reduction of incontinence, but the non-intensive PFMT programs were also included in the overall data analysis. The Incontinence Cure Program™ available to your patients through at **Integrity Rehab** incorporates the intensive elements shown to increase effectiveness.

### Integrity's Incontinence Cure Program™ can include:



- **Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises:** Integrity therapists guide patients through exercises that train them to maintain control in a variety of postures and relevant activities.
- **Biofeedback:** Integrity's equipment allows patients to see the result of their effort and enables them to develop better control.
- **E-Stim:** Gentle electrical stimulation to pelvic floor muscles can improve strengthening in some patients.
- **Vaginal Cones and Weights:** Small weights may be used to increase strength of the pelvic floor muscles.
- **Strategies:** Integrity therapists will help your patient develop and adhere to various strategies that improve continence (e.g. diet modifications, bathroom schedules, bladder retraining, etc.).

\* Also available as a home health program to homebound patients with Medicare.

Please tell your patients about Integrity Rehab

## References

1. Hay-Smith J, Morkved S, Fairbrother K, et al. Pelvic floor muscle training for prevention and treatment of urinary and faecal incontinence in antenatal and postnatal women. *Cochrane Database Syst Ev.* 2008 Oct 8; (4): CD007471.
2. Bo K. Does pelvic floor muscle training prevent and treat urinary and fecal incontinence in pregnancy? *Nature Clinical Practice Urology.* March 2009; 6 (3): 122-3.