

5 Things You Can Do Every Day to Increase Pelvic Health

1. Stretch Your Calves

Tight muscles in your legs can restrict blood flow and tug on the pelvis, pulling it out of a neutral position. Stretching your calves can help restore natural alignment, getting everything lined up to work the way nature intended.

2. Wear Minimal Shoes

Want to get more calf stretching done without even having to think about it? Switch to minimal shoes! Minimal, or barefoot style, shoes are flat, wide, and flexible. And when I say flat, I mean all the way flat. Even most athletic shoes these days, which are supposedly built for function and comfort, have a tiny rise built into the heel. Walking and sitting all day with your heels slightly elevated shortens the calf muscles and also tilts your body forward, requiring it to compensate by shifting your knees, hips, and back out of neutral alignment. Look for shoes that are labeled as “zero-drop,” meaning there is no “drop” between the height of the heel and the ball of the foot. Not only will this help stretch those calf muscles back to their natural length, but it will also help you do the following:

3. Untuck Your Pelvis

Like I mentioned in tip #2, our modern footwear tends to make it difficult to stand and walk in a more aligned way. Our shoes, combined with our sedentary habits and our natural draw toward comfort and energy conservation (think slouching on the couch vs sitting upright on a firm surface) often cause us to shift our pelvis forward and tuck our tailbone under. While standing, try backing your weight up so that your pelvis is stacked more over your heels than the balls of your feet. When sitting, try to sit directly on top of your “sitz bones” (the two large bony bits on the bottom of your butt) instead of letting your pelvis curl under. Imagine that your tailbone extends into a full-length tail and you don’t want to crush it or tuck it under you.

4. Sit on the Floor

Sitting on the floor can have many benefits, one being that it encourages you to shift and stretch and move dynamically instead of just sinking into a couch cushion and remaining in that position for hours at a time. The other is that the act of getting down to the floor requires that you use core muscles (including the pelvic floor) to support you on the way down and back up. There are many ways you can get down to the floor, one of which is tip #5.



5. Squat

Squatting requires and builds strength and length and the muscles surrounding the pelvis. If you have a compromised pelvic floor (such as diagnosed organ prolapse) you want to be careful about adding squats to your routine because of the high level of pressure they can create in the abdominal cavity. If you don't have cause for concern in that area, I highly recommend experimenting with how to add some squats into your daily movement repertoire. Instead of bending over using your back, perhaps try squatting down to pick up that item you dropped, or grab that muffin tin from the bottom cupboard, or pet that cute dog at the office. Some tips for squatting:

- Place your feet wider than hips width apart so that if you had the flexibility to squat all the way down, your pelvis could rest between your ankles
- Pull your hips back and try to keep your shins vertical as much as possible, stacking the knee above the ankle and asking the glute and hamstring muscles to do the bulk of the work instead of the quads and knees
- Practice this squat form with some assistance from a sturdy bar, like a strong metal railing. Hang onto the bar and allow it to take your weight and counterbalance you as you pull your hips back and down with your shin vertical
- Pay attention to how much you are using momentum or gravity to get up and down and try to slowly shift toward using more muscle control instead
- Maintain “good form” as far as you can, and then just do what you need to do to get the rest of the way to your destination. Progress, not perfection. Every bit counts.

There you have it! My top tips for putting your uterus in a position to succeed! Practice adding these into your daily routine and see if you start to notice an improvement in your menstrual cramping over time. These are not quick fixes that you can just do a couple days a month and expect magic results. These are long-term changes to how you use your body that will allow it to function in a more natural way.

If you want more exercises that can support you on your journey toward a less painful period, or if you would like to explore ways to start restoring natural function to other parts of your body as well, check out my work at www.sarahdegravemovement.com or follow me on Facebook or Instagram.