

Pelvic Physiotherapy in the Netherlands, not only for women



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Education

Pelvic physiotherapy is a specialism within the field of physiotherapy in the Netherlands. The education is a 3 year master degree programme and one can only be enrolled after successful completion of their bachelor physiotherapy diploma. Pelvic physiotherapy in the Netherlands is internationally renowned for its high standard. The program has a strong focus on evidence based and clinical based diagnostics and treatment, skills training, field experience and (applied) research. Furthermore, aspects like professional attitude, patient/therapist dynamics and emotional integrity are strong focal points within the program.

Pelvic physiotherapy for both men, women and children

The pelvic physiotherapist helps people with complaints in the pelvic area. Treatment in the pelvic physiotherapist begins with information, prevention and a good diagnosis. Following are training, counseling and treatment of men, women and children with the following complaints:

- urinary incontinence
- faecal incontinence
- Urge (incontinence)
- difficulty in expelling urine and / or faeces
- urogenital prolapse
- abdominal pain
- pain in the pelvic floor, genitalia or prostate (chronic pelvic pain syndrome, CPPS)
- sexual disorders (vaginism, vulvodynia, dyspareunia, erectile dysfunction)
- pregnancy related pelvic pain and lower back pain
- pre- and post operative patients in relation to surgical procedures in the lower abdomen and pelvic region.

Different roles of the pelvic physiotherapist

Pelvic physiotherapists play a role in all levels of the health care in the Netherlands. Many work in the private sector, having their own practice. A smaller number work in a hospital or rehabilitation centre. All university hospitals have pelvic physiotherapists working, mostly involved in research. A number of pelvic physiotherapists participate in specialized pelvic floor centres in hospitals and are strongly linked to multidisciplinary pelvic floor teams.



Referral needed?

Patients can be referred for diagnosis and therapy by general practitioners and other clinicians working in the pelvic floor field. Patients whom are referred by a physician are required to have appropriate referral notice.

Consultation

To determine if there is an indication for pelvic physiotherapy treatment physicians can utilize a pelvic physiotherapy consult. After the diagnostic process the physician receives a written report with the test outcomes. The decision to subsequently start pelvic physical therapy treatment lays with the designated physician.

Direct Access Physical Therapy (DTF)

In the Netherlands patients no longer require a referral to make use of pelvic physiotherapy. Through the consumer website www.defysiotherapeut.com patients can view all registered pelvic physiotherapists.

When a patient visits a pelvic physiotherapist through direct access the pelvic physiotherapist will firstly carry out a screening to detect any contra-indications for pelvic physiotherapy treatment. A report is sent to the general physician.

How does the Dutch Health Care system works?

Every Dutch citizen has to have a basic insurance by law. People can supplement their standard insurance although the standard covers a fairly broad range health services. Physiotherapy however is covered in supplemental insurance packages. Check your policy for the specific terms of your insurer. However, the treatment of urinary incontinence is

ensured in the basic insurance provided that the own risk is met. In addition, treatments for children under the age of 18 are reimbursed from basic insurance (without risk).

Pre- and postnatal care

A pelvic physiotherapist can offer a pregnant-fit course in practice or elsewhere. This is a contemporary course for women who are pregnant or recently gave birth. During classes in small groups, fitness and strength are trained to prevent complaints and physical inconveniences.

Scientific development

Pelvic physiotherapy is performed on the principles of evidence based and/or consensus/clinical based practice. There is a growing trend of pelvic physiotherapists who have achieved their PhD in the field of pelvic physiotherapy.

Guidelines

The Royal Dutch Association for Physical Therapy (KNGF) regularly develops new guidelines. Recently the guideline for stress urinary incontinence, which has been translated in 18 languages, has been updated. A guideline for pregnancy related pelvic pain has been developed.

Furthermore guidelines are being developed for faecal incontinence, treatment of total anal rupture, treatment of lichen and planus sclerosis and two multidisciplinary guidelines on the treatment of incontinence in elderly patients and women. Guidelines are becoming more and more 'living' documents, updated quickly whenever new evidence has become available.

Electronic Patient Record (Personal Health Record)

To register and follow the treatment and results of a patient an Electronic Patient Record especially suited for pelvic physiotherapy has been developed. This contains not only items concerning the patient's personal administration, but also the patient interview and history, physical examination, diagnosis, validated questionnaires, therapy, interventions and treatment goals, treatment program and outcomes.

Maintaining quality

The pelvic physiotherapists are registered in the so-called Central Register for Quality of the Royal Dutch Association for Physical Therapy or 'het Keurmerk'. In 2017 there are more than 600 registered pelvic physiotherapists practising their profession in the Netherlands. Almost all are affiliated as members to the Dutch Association of Pelvic Physiotherapy (NVFB). The registered Pelvic Physiotherapists are obliged to maintain their quality by means of life long learning through anticipating in educational courses, congresses, symposia, meetings, etc. The quality of all post degree education is audited and accredited by an independent board of the KNGF.

The Dutch Association for Pelvic Physiotherapy (NVFB)

The NVFB is an active organisation organising two congresses annually. It is also one of the longest existing specialised physiotherapy associations celebrated its 35th anniversary in 2016. Furthermore, the NVFB has its own journal which is published twice a year, monthly digital newsletter, a website, Facebookpage and a wealth of promotional material for its members and clients.

Apart from the national association many pelvic physiotherapists are also a member of a regional physiotherapy associations where colleagues discuss and share professional topics on a regular basis. More and more Dutch pelvic physiotherapists become members of multidisciplinary organisations like ICS (International Continence Society) or IUGA (International Urogynecological Association).



Currently the Dutch Association for Pelvic Physiotherapy is developing a pelvic physiotherapy standard. Such a standard is of significant importance in order to use an Electronic Patient Record in the nearby future which meets the quality criteria set by the association. Through such a standard it is possible to develop Clinical Prediction Rules which in turn will contribute to the enhancement of best practice evidence based pelvic physiotherapy.

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More information?

More information about pelvic physiotherapy or to find a registered pelvic physiotherapist?

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www.bekkenfysiotherapie.nl

