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A Guide to Reducing Saddle Pain During Riding

Page 1 of 2

Saddle pain, pelvic numbness, urinary changes, and changes in sexual function may be a sign that you are compressing your pudendal nerve while riding. General soreness is common with new riders and long distances but once numbness or changes in urinary or sexual function occur you are risking nerve trauma.

Statistics

Stan Reents, PharmD updated an article on 10-12-2012 he wrote called "Bicycle Seats" at AthleteInMe.com. These are some facts:

1. Studies show that 35-81% of cyclists experience perineal (groin) and/or buttock pain after long-distance riding. This appears to be a more frequent complaint from women as opposed to men riders (Bressel E, et al. 2003).
2. Pressures generated in the perineum region while sitting on a bicycle seat can be 4-5-fold higher than pressures known to cause decubitus ulcers (commonly known as "pressure sores") in bedridden patients (Lowe BD, et al. 2004).
3. Sitting on a bicycle seat has been shown to drastically reduce blood supply to the penis. In one study, it was reduced by as much as 70%. It made no difference whether the riders were sitting and pedalling or just sitting. Blood flow was back to normal after a 10-minute recovery period (Sommer F, et al. 2001).
4. Regarding neurologic problems, competitive cyclists have been noted to develop numbness of the penis and scrotum, an altered sense of ejaculation, and disturbance of normal urinary function after prolonged riding (Silbert PL, et al. 1991). This is thought to be due to irritation of the pudendal nerve, another complication of higher pressures in the perineal region, possibly leading to pudendal neuropathies (Oberpenning F, et al. 1994).
5. Data from the Massachusetts Male Aging Study (MMAS) show that bicycling more than 3 hrs per week was associated with ED (Marceau L, et al. 2001).



[Profile Design](#) Tri-Stryke



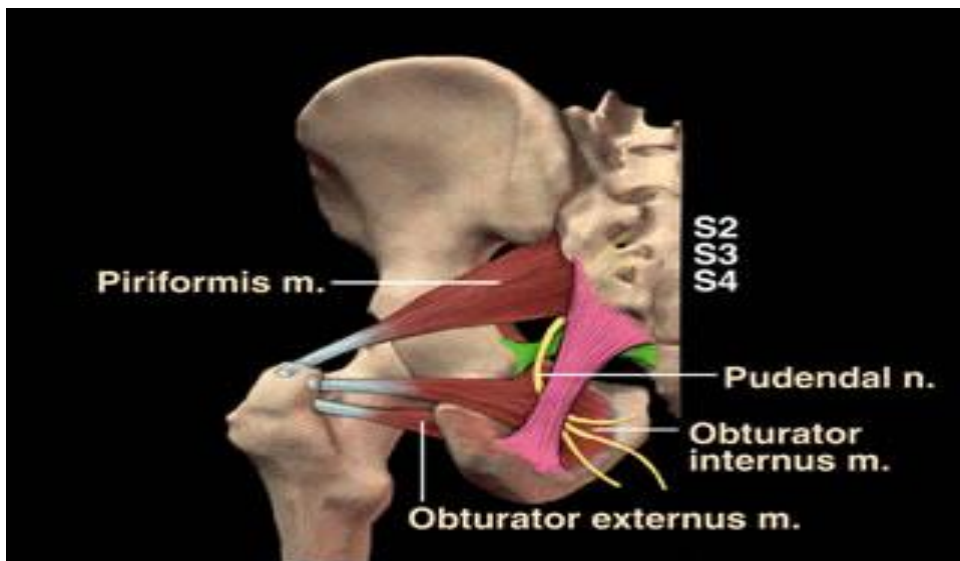
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Page 2 of 2

Self Help Check List

1. **Proper seat and bike alignment** and fit which may include: lowering the nose of the bike seat, lowering the entire bike seat and trying different seats designed to reduce pressure. Newer split nose seats reduce perineal pressure by 50%. Hobson seats at www.hobsonseat.com significantly minimize perineal pressure for those with ongoing pelvic problems. One downside is that riders do seem to feel less overall control of the bike using this seat but at least they can ride without causing further damage.
2. **Good bicycle shorts/pants** with padding.
3. **Good flexibility** of the hips/spine muscles will reduce the overall pull and pressure on the pudendal nerve. Proper hamstring and buttock flexibility is essential.
4. **Well functioning Pelvic floor muscles.** Tight pelvic floor muscles will exacerbate compression on the pudendal nerve. Tight pelvic floor muscles may also become a source of saddle soreness in itself. Already weakened pelvic floor muscles may feel the effects of diminished nerve supply more quickly causing symptoms of pelvic pressure, urinary urgency and frequency, and erectile dysfunction.
5. **Frequent Decompression** on long rides by changing your position on the saddle frequently, riding with hands on top of the handlebars, and standing frequently (several minutes for every 15 minutes of cycling). One study showed that blood flow to the penis improved after one minute of standing.
6. **Physician evaluation and Physical Therapy** treatment for ongoing problems that do not resolve with lowering bike mileage, rest, and following the above suggestions.



The Physical Medicine Center of Marin, with offices in Mill Valley and Novato, founded by Lisa Iacovelli, P.T. and Michael Iacovelli, PT, DC. Lisa Iacovelli, P.T. was one of the first providers of comprehensive pelvic floor physical therapy services in Marin. Our therapists each have over twenty years of experience in their individual specialties which include: manual therapy, orthopedic/sports rehab, pelvic floor dysfunction, prenatal and postnatal care, chiropractic care, biofeedback, and pilates based rehabilitation. We work closely with referring physicians and allied health professionals to provide the highest level of comprehensive care to our clients. We look forward to working with you.