The Rise of Urogynecology
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Helping patients improve their quality of life after childbirth.

A new subspecialty field of Gynecology has arisen in the last 30 years, called Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery—"Urogynecology" for short. Urogynecology focuses on loss of bladder and bowel control, prolapse problems, and pelvic pain issues. It has grown from a small group of gynecologists to include several thousand physicians and nurse practitioners who are devoted to understanding and providing relief from these problems.

For most women, the onset of urogynecological issues begins after childbirth. Before childbirth, most people take their pelvic functions for granted and go about their daily activities giving hardly any thought to the complexity involved in normal bowel, bladder, and reproductive function. But in reality, the human pelvis is remarkable and contains several complex systems, each with a large supply of blood vessels, nerves, support tissue, and muscles.

Because our knowledge of pelvic anatomy has improved over the last 20 years, we better understand the significant strains placed on various areas of the pelvis and pelvic floor during childbirth. Today, most women are able to deliver a baby with only small tears and avoid the massive damage that obstructed labor can cause due to modern obstetric and gynecologic care. However, severe damage to the mother's pelvic musculature, nerves, support structures, and vagina can still occur during natural childbirth. Sometimes this damage can be severe enough to make control of bowel or bladder very difficult or impossible after labor, as these tissues usually are not repaired at the time of delivery, unlike the superficial tears that are obvious with childbirth.

The specialty of Urogynecology is an effort to understand how childbirth and various other problems like genetics, tissue composition, and chronic diseases affect the health of the female pelvic floor and pelvic support tissue. These problems can profoundly affect a women’s quality of life. If you suffer from some urogynecological problems, like the loss of bowel or bladder control, or uterine or vaginal prolapse (where your uterus or vagina falls out of its normal position), you may not know what medical options you have and which kind of healthcare provider may be able to help you best. To begin addressing any pelvic problems you may be experiencing, it is reasonable to first see your gynecologist, who will help you address your condition or refer you to a urogynecologist.

Urogynecologists have additional training and expertise in treating urinary and bowel control problems, bladder and vaginal prolapse difficulties, and pelvic pain issues. We often have more options to address the types of problems that you may be facing than a gynecologist would. These can range from medications, non-surgical therapy, and ultimately, surgical options when necessary.
While the pelvic floor is one of those places in the body that we prefer to not have to think or talk about, when it is not functioning well the pelvic floor can make our lives miserable. Urogynecology is a new medical subspecialty that has arisen with a primary purpose of alleviating the suffering these problems cause. If you are suffering from any of these problems come and see us at Beaver Dam Women’s Health—we have been helping women work through these issues for nearly 20 years.