

What if my tests for male genital infections are negative but I still have symptoms?

This leaflet provides information for men with symptoms of discharge from the penis, pain on passing urine, irritation of the penis or pain in the testicles whose tests for infection and urethritis have come back negative.

We have introduced the new rapid sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing service so that we can get the results of gonorrhoea and chlamydia tests before you are seen by the doctor or nurse. These infections cause about 40% of cases of urethritis (irritation of the tube inside the penis).

Your tests have come back as negative for gonorrhoea and chlamydia. We have also found no evidence of inflammation (irritation) of the lining of the tube inside the penis (urethra) either from the special swab the clinician took or by using a new test on your urine which we sent to the laboratory for testing. The longer you can hold your urine for, the more accurate these tests are. If no inflammation is present, you are very unlikely to have an infection.

Men whose tests are all negative can often develop symptoms as a result of anxiety because of worrying about having picked up a STI. Anxiety can cause the muscles in their pelvic floor (the muscles around the base of the penis, scrotum and around the anus – see diagram below) to become tense. This may change how urine flows and can cause irritation and discomfort. The nerves that supply the pelvic floor muscles also supply other parts of the genitals such as the end of the penis, the testicles and perineum (the area between your testicles and back passage). The body can mistake the pain from the tense pelvic floor muscles and think it is coming from these other places. It can also feel as though the pain is in the lower part of your tummy or make you want pass urine more often or make passing urine feel more difficult.

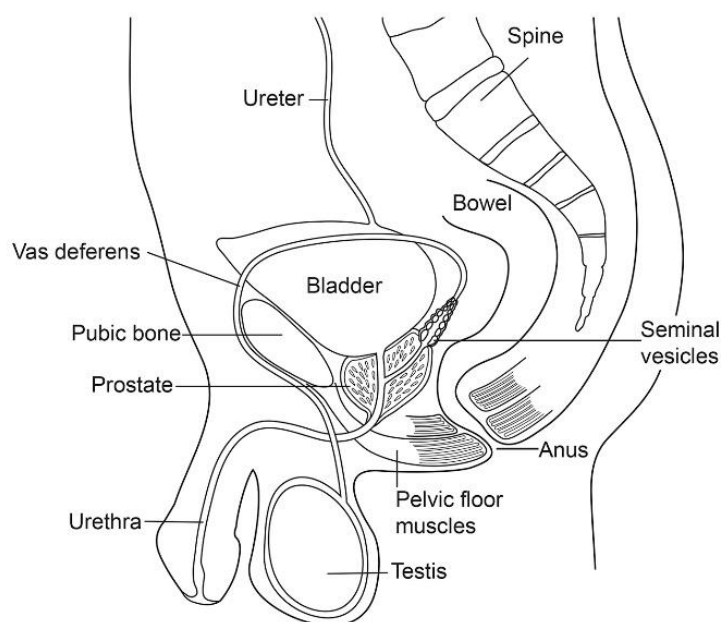


Diagram of the male genital tract showing the pelvic floor anatomy and how it is linked to the urinary tract with the urethra passing through it (known as the external urethral sphincter). The pelvic floor therefore helps control how we pass water (urinate).

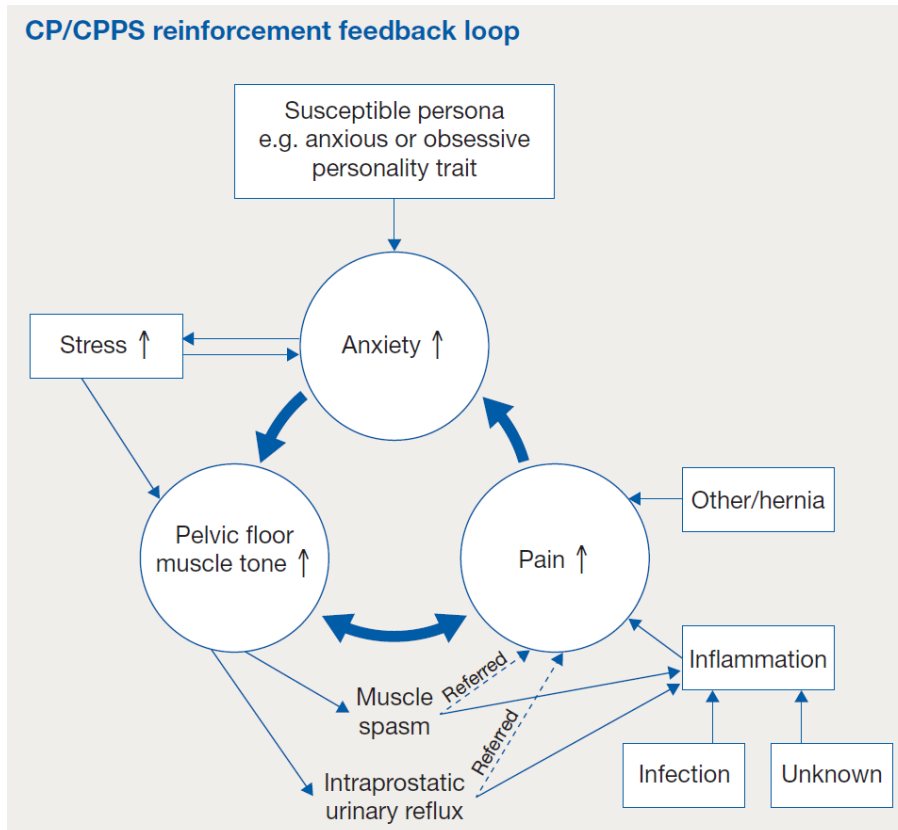


Diagram illustrating how anxiety can unconsciously cause some men to increase their pelvic floor muscle tone (they do not realise they are doing this as normally we cannot “feel” our pelvic floor). This can result in muscle spasm and/or urine travelling backwards into the prostate on passing water. Both can result in pain which is then experienced elsewhere in the pelvic area e.g. tip of the penis, testicles, perineum (area behind the testicles), lower abdomen and sometimes the inner thighs. It may also cause difficulties or pain when passing water or ejaculating. This in turn makes them more anxious which results in making the pelvic floor tone even more tense and increasing the pain etc.

Being aware of this process can sometimes help reduce anxiety which may, in turn, reduce how tense the pelvic floor muscles are and therefore reduce symptoms. Unity has developed a leaflet on how men can relax their pelvic floor muscle tone which is available on our website <https://www.unitysexualhealth.co.uk/stis-and-testing/infoandtesting/>

Here is a link to a website which provides advice on how to relax your pelvic floor muscles <http://www.pelvicpain.org.au/information/men/pelvic-floor-muscle-relaxation-men/>

If your symptoms continue, we advise coming back first thing in the morning so that we can take a swab from your urethra after you have held your urine overnight (don't drink any fluids after 8 pm and then pass urine before going to sleep). This can be arranged by speaking to a health adviser (0117 342 6944).

If you have any questions or would like further information please discuss this with the member of staff who looked after you today if you attended clinic.