



POSTNATAL PELVIC HEALTH: TRIAGE IS NEEDED



AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION TO HELP TRIAGE POSTNATAL WOMEN SHOULD THEY REQUIRE SUPPORT

Marie Fell, Independent Physiotherapist and Pilates Instructor

BACKGROUND

- **Postnatal pelvic health gaining acknowledgment** across fitness, health and medical professionals via media and social. People post birth are starting to recognise “**common is not normal**” and **requesting improved postnatal care**.
 - The NHS Long Term Plan highlights the **gap in our healthcare system** and aims to “**improve access to postnatal physiotherapists to support women who need it to recover from birth**”. [1]
 - NHS England suggested “**a new universal 6-8 week post natal check for new mothers**” would become the new norm. [2]
 - The NHS Long Term plan states “**Physiotherapy is by far the most cost-effective intervention** for preventing and treating mild - moderate incontinence and prolapse”. [1]
 - We recognize **that a thorough 6-8 week postnatal check up is not attainable** with the current ratio of pelvic health physios to births.
 - Approx. 900 pelvic health physiotherapists (2018).
 - Approx. 713,000 UK births (2018). [3]
 - However, “safe after your 6 week post natal check” to drive, run or heavy lift used by many insurance policies, exercise programmes and gyms.
- We as Pelvic health physiotherapists need to step out, speak up, create solutions and shine a light on: WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP.**

KEY POINTS

- There is a **postcode lottery** around **postnatal care**.
- There are **no standardised 6 week postnatal** checks in place.
- The GP check up is to the **individual surgeries discretion**.
- Many use the 6 week baby check to ask mum if “**she feels ok?**” as recommended in the NICE guidelines. [4]
- GP’s are facing **extreme caseloads** and **do not have the time**, capacity or skillset to give advice.

WHAT SOLUTIONS CAN WE OFFER?

We propose a **four tier system** where **ALL postnatal people** receive:

- 1 - Educational resources at their 6 -8 week check.**
- 2 - A simple and accessible postnatal pelvic health screening tool.**
- 3 - Identify those with risk factors and telephone triage/screen them.**
- 4 - Face to face contact or group session to educate further.**

As the NHS Long Term Plan proposes not all postnatal people at 6 - 8 weeks may need or realise they require follow up. [1] Therefore this would **identify those in need and offer a timely service**.

QUESTIONNAIRE AIMS

- Gather information in an **easy to complete** manner.
- Capture postnatal symptoms **quickly**.
- **Provide insight** into how many people were receiving a 6 week GP check.
- **Highlight common concerns** post partum.

METHOD

- February-March 2020 :**777 completed online questionnaires**.
- Questionnaire distributed via **Facebook and Instagram**.
- Online form - **jotform** used to collate information.
- Inclusion criteria: **Any person who had given birth**. No exclusions or age limits.



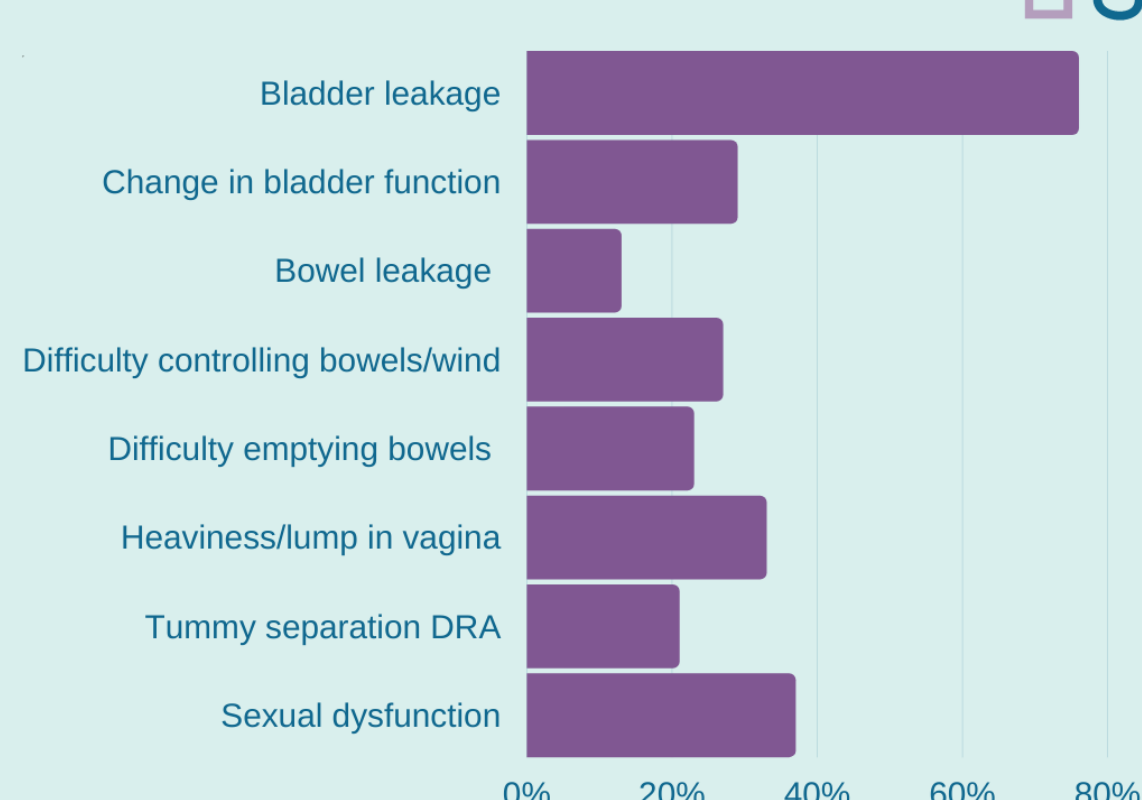
JotForm



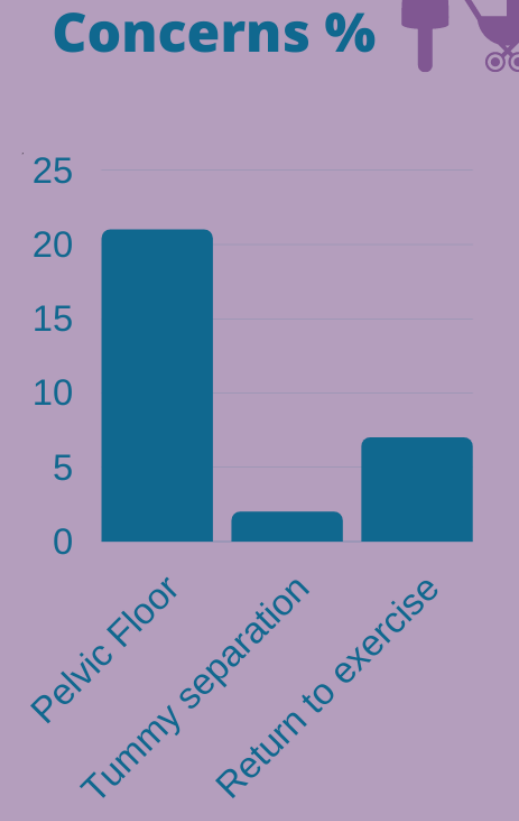
777 Completed Questionnaires

**Average age: 36
Average pregnancies: 2**

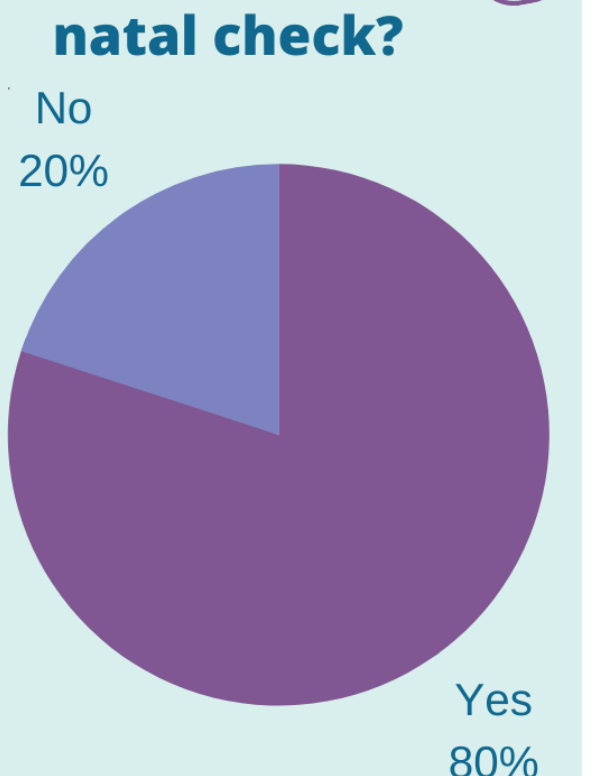
Self-reported postnatal symptoms



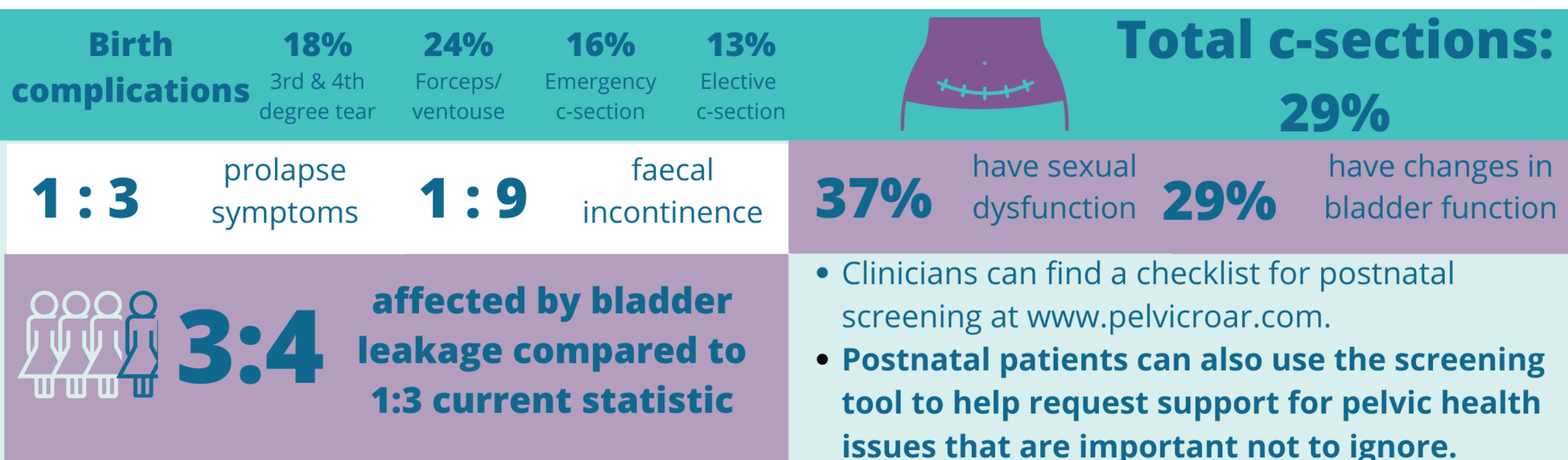
Post Natal Concerns %



Did they have a GP post natal check?



INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS



- **76%** suffering bladder leakage.
- C-section rates **29%** above the 10-15% WHO recommendation. [5]
- **42%** have birth complications that impact pelvic health (mechanical deliveries or 3rd/4th degree tears). MASIC [6]
- **80%** did receive a 6 week GP check.
- Postnatal concerns low in terms of pelvic floor **16%**, abdominal **20%** and returning to exercise **7%**. These are the areas we get many people seeking help and support for in clinic and exercise classes.

POINTS TO CONSIDER / LIMITATIONS

- It would be interesting to find out what information or checks are being given in the GP check-up. Further investigation needed in this area.
- Questionnaire findings may be skewed as shared on social media platforms promoting pelvic health awareness – possible that concerns postpartum had already been dealt with.

CONCLUSION

- **Easy to deliver, simple to access and complete online.**
- **Provides insight into individual pelvic health symptoms and birth histories which would allow for further triage to be streamlined.**
- **Postnatal patients can use the questionnaire for self-screening and self-selection.**
- **Clinicians can use it as a useful screening tool.**

REFERENCES:

1. National Health Service (NHS) (2019) *The NHS Long Term Plan*. URL: <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/> Section 3.17
2. NHS England. (2020) Kanani, N & Waller, E *Ensuring general practice, networks and our patients are at the heart of what we do* URL: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/blog/ensuring-general-practice-networks-and-our-patients-are-at-the-heart-of-what-we-do/>
3. Birth statistics: Office for National Statistics (2018) *Births in England and Wales* URL: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2018>
4. National Records of Scotland (2018) *Births in Scotland* URL: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/scotlands-facts/births-in-scotland>
5. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2018) *Births in Northern Ireland* URL: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/birth-statistics>

4. National Institute for Healthcare and Excellence (NICE) (2020) *Antenatal and postnatal mental health: clinical management and service guidance*. URL: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg192/chapter/1-Recommendations>
- 5 World Health Organisation (WHO) (2015) *WHO statement on caesarean section rates*. URL: https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/maternal_perinatal_health/cs-statement/en/
6. MASIC; Mothers with Anal Sphincter Injuries in Childbirth (2020) *The MASIC Foundation: A Plan for the first three years*. URL: <https://masic.org.uk>