Rectal Spasm and Levator Ani Summary

There are a number of terms for muscle-based pain in the rectal area, including levator ani syndrome, proctalgia fugax, and pelvic floor muscle spasm. The root cause of rectal spasm is tension in the pelvic muscles, including the levator ani muscle. The levator ani is a broad, thin muscle inside the pelvis that tightens and relaxes to aid in a number of bodily functions, including bowel movements. Pelvic floor muscle spasms can also cause tightness, burning, and a sensation that the rectum is full.

Sometimes the pelvic muscle spasm is caused by a trapped nerve or ligament, or some sort of adhesion or restriction in your pelvis. Levator ani pain tends to be constant and centered in the levator ani muscle, while proctalgia fugax pain is a short, stabbing pain in the rectum.

Pelvic floor muscle spasms often begin when you have a build-up of stool. But once your rectum goes into spasm, it then prevents the stool from coming out, so you get into a really unpleasant feedback loop. The way to break this feedback loop is to get your rectum and/or anus to relax, so that you can have a bowel movement without too much pushing and straining. Here are several techniques that work well, and can be used in combination:

1. Apply a hot castor oil pack to rectal muscles, followed by heat - Full instructions can be found at www.listentoyourgut.com (search “castor oil pack”), or in Jini Patel Thompson's book Listen To Your Gut.

2. Take a hot magnesium bath - Magnesium is nature's muscle relaxant. Fill your bathtub with hot water and then add 2 ounces of magnesium oil (or, if cost is a factor, one ounce of magnesium oil and 1 cup of epsom salts).

3. Take nanoparticle or angstrom magnesium - Regular magnesium (in tablet, capsule or liquid form) will irritate your colon and stimulate a bowel movement, making the spasming worse. However, angstrom magnesium is so tiny it is absorbed instantly (through the lining of the mouth) and does not need to pass through the digestive system.

4. Take herbal muscle relaxants - The two best herbal muscle relaxants and anti-spasmodics are cramp bark and black haw. Black haw is the stronger of the two herbs. Both will relax cramping in all smooth muscles, including the levator ani muscles, pelvic floor muscles, and the rectum.

If you suspect it’s a trapped nerve or ligament, muscle or myofascial restriction in your pelvis that is causing your rectal spasm, or if you have been diagnosed with levator ani syndrome, proctalgia fugax, pudendal nerve entrapment (PNE) or Alcock's canal, then Bodywork Therapy should release and relieve your muscle spasm.

Look for a chiropractor, osteopathic doctor, physiologist, physical therapist or massage therapist who is trained in Active Release Technique (A.R.T.) or in John F. Barnes’ myofascial techniques, and ask them to look specifically at your levator ani muscles, sacrum, coccyx and pudendal nerve.

For full details and instructions, including dosages, please see our website: www.ListenToYourGut.com