

Let's talk peeing

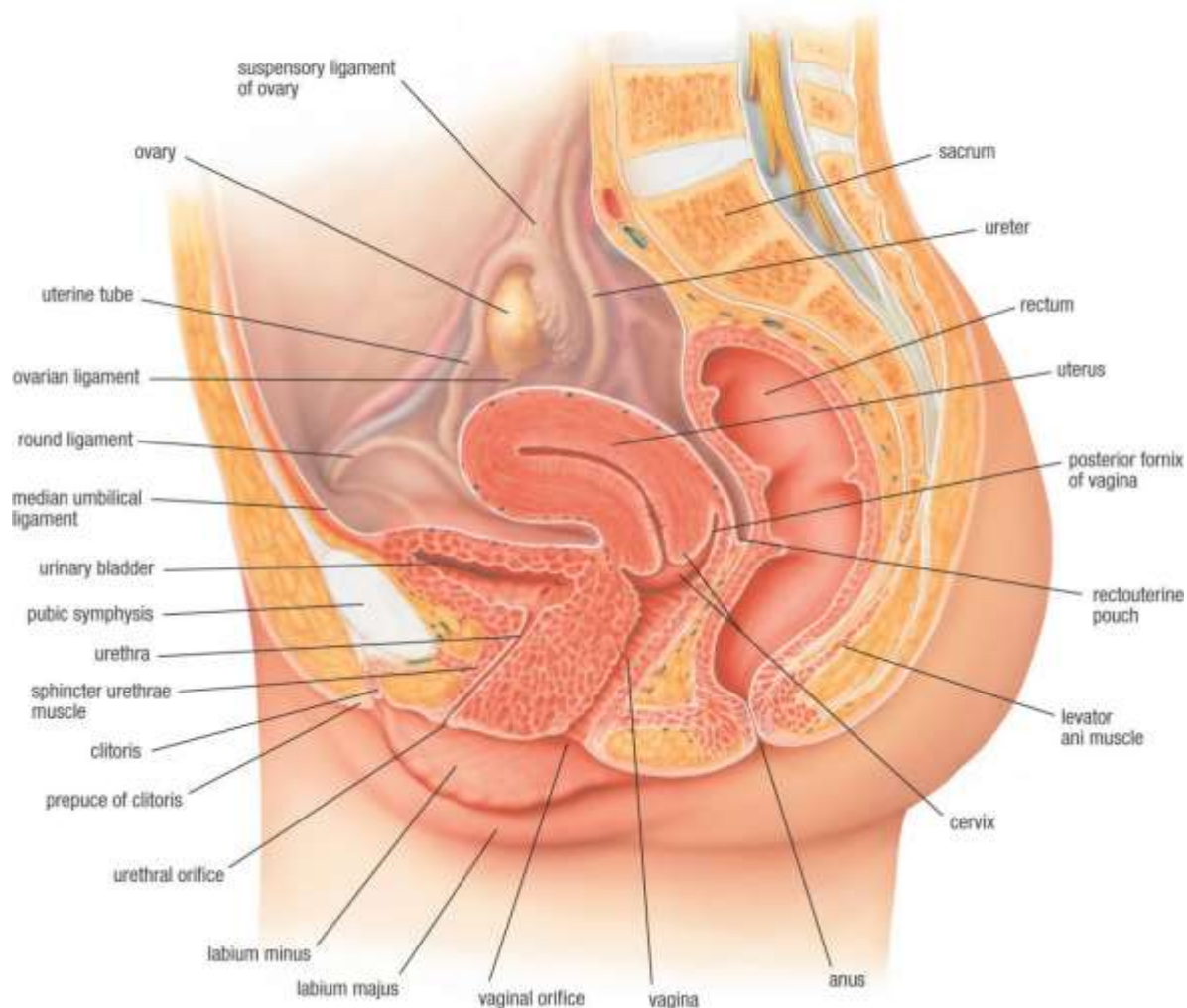
Technically, female stress urinary incontinence (SUI) associated with heavy cleans.

It's a real thing. SUI occurs all the time in all sports (and coughing and sneezing which may become sports at some point). Women weightlifters deal pretty well with it in training but on the competition platform, it screws everything up. Let's give the world the benefit of the doubt and assume no one is talking about it in an effort to be discrete – but we need to talk about it.

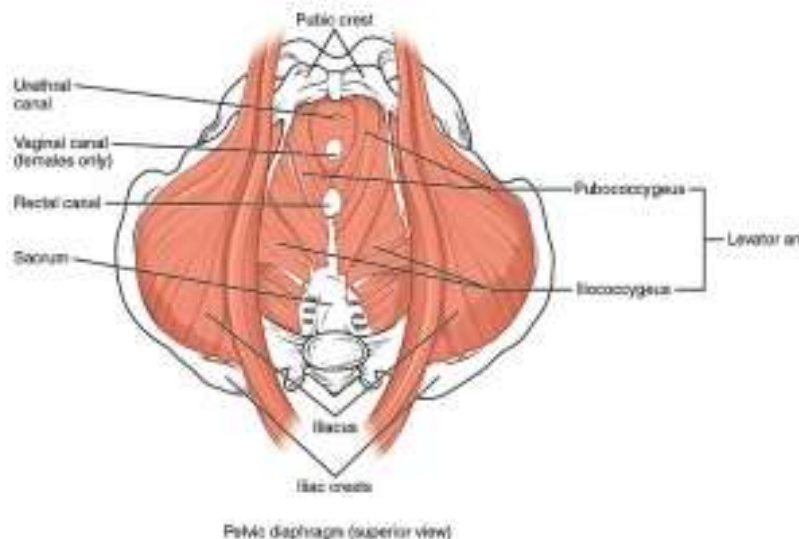
Let's start with a brief, general understanding of the female anatomy and physiology.

Stay with me, this is relevant to competition.

FEMALE UROGENITAL SYSTEM (MIDSAGITTAL VIEW)



The bladder (which holds the pee) sits at the very bottom of the uterus, intestines, stomach, lungs, etc. etc. A small sphincter controls when pee is released. Of course it releases voluntarily in response to nerve impulses when the bladder is full or infected, but it also releases *involuntarily* when a lot of pressure is placed on it.



The pelvic floor muscles (PFM) are the only muscles giving structural support to the bladder. They are comprised of a three-layer muscular plate expanding from the pubic symphysis along the sidewalls of the ileum towards the coccyx.* (PFM research related to SUI has been focused on jumping and running, but not maximal effort cleans.)

Strong PFM and external urethral sphincter can withstand pressure during heavy lifting, but they have their limits. During a max effort clean, any collapse of the spine or upper back, will allow the internal organs to press on the bladder – suddenly – with a lot of force. No matter how many Kegels your lifter has done, the PFM are no match for 70-150 kgs of force coming down on them suddenly. Result = peeing

Elements specific to weightlifting competition, actually contribute to this and make it significantly worse.

Lifting max weight = increased risk of supporting muscle collapse (even just a bit)

Cinched up belt = increased abdominal support but...pressure on the bladder too

Weight cut that includes rehydrating an hour before lifting = full bladder

Fueling the body quickly for performance = full stomach and intestines

Caffeine = Diuretic that increases urgency and frequency to pee

Valsalva = Increases lung volume and creates core stability which also decreases the space below the diaphragm (more pressure on the bladder)

Peeing during a max attempt on the competition platform is kind of a distraction.

Any distraction during a lift can throw off the concentration of the lifter – but PEEING?!!! Could everyone please stand together right now and collectively applaud the few women in the history of the sport who have successfully completed their lift while peeing. BRAVO LADIES! For the rest of the women, peeing is a game changer.

Listen up coaches – here are a few things your lifter may not be telling you – and may never admit to the fact that she isn't telling you:

1. She isn't hearing the corrections or cues you are giving her about her lifting because she is stressed about peeing.
2. She's contemplating not cinching up her belt as tightly on that last lift.
3. She is mentally preparing to miss the lift if she feels pee.

Let's fix that.

Not that long ago, when female weightlifters were so few in numbers they were legends like the unicorn, there was no Facebook, no texting and certainly no Instagram. If you wanted female secrets about a nearly nonexistent sport, you had to gather in the dark recesses of the bathroom during weigh in and be bold enough to talk. This is where the women of the world passed information discretely. What we learned is that Australian women wear 'medis' or 'meds' when they lift – training or competition. 'Meds' is the Australian slang for tampons. "They say" medis support the uterus when squatting. Although it's unlikely a tampon in the vagina will support the bladder from the pressure placed on it when 70+ kg is

suddenly received, it does do a pretty good job of preventing small amounts of pee from leaking out for all to see. Maxipads on the other hand....

Do not underestimate the power of the pad. They come in all sizes and all absorbencies. Some singlets leave enough room in the crotch that you can wear a pad without anyone knowing. Bike shorts or compression shorts under the singlet are a big help. The confidence of being able to attempt that max clean knowing that if pee happens it's managed – can help eliminate the distraction during the lift, the stress in the warm up room, the possible embarrassment later = good lift. Game changer.

Coaches:

1. Don't count on your amazing PFM strengthening program to solve this. On the other hand, strong gluts, quads, hamstrings, spinal erectors and abdominals can receive insane amounts of weight and when used to put the body into the *correct* position, can indirectly protect the bladder - somewhat.
2. Don't count on your female lifters being willing to admit to any of this.
3. Plan time for your lifter to pee during the clean and jerk. Don't leave that to your lifter to stress over privately. Make it part of your attempt planning.

Loaders:

1. With approval from the technical controller, two of you roll the bar forward off the platform and clean it as though there is blood on the bar. The other one use a towel to dry the floor. The floor doesn't need to be sterile but it needs to be dry and not sticky. Wear gloves – this is a bodily fluid.
2. Those of you who manage this discretely – bless you.

Lifters who have never experienced SUI:

1. You go girl! Go wear that speedo and hashtag #padfree #livinglifeontheedge #callmedangergirl