

PATIENT INFORMATION

Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises

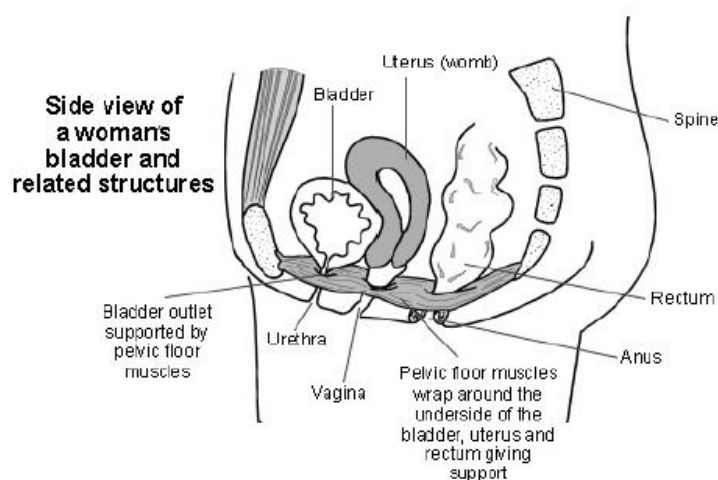
What are the Pelvic Floor Muscles?

The pelvic floor muscle is rather like a hammock/sling consisting of layers of muscles and ligaments that stretch from the pubic bone at the front to the tailbone (coccyx) at the back.

What does the Pelvic Floor Muscle do?

- Supports the bladder, womb and bowel, keeping them in the correct position
- Tightly closes your bladder and bowel openings to prevent incontinence
- Helps with sexual function and sensation

The pelvic floor muscles actively squeeze when you cough, sneeze or laugh to prevent leakage. They relax when you go to the toilet to let the urine out and afterwards, they tighten to keep the urine in.



Side view of a woman's pelvic organs and pelvic floor muscles.

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What happens if the Pelvic Floor Muscles are not working well?

- You may leak urine when you cough, laugh, exercise or exert yourself
- You may have a sudden need to rush to the toilet and leak on the way to the toilet
- You may have leakage of faeces or difficulty controlling wind
- You may have a sensation of a vaginal prolapse (a feeling of aching/heaviness or lowness in the vagina)
- You may experience less satisfaction during intercourse

Who should do Pelvic Floor Muscle exercises?

All women need to do pelvic floor muscle exercises. However, the muscle may become weak:

- Following pregnancy and childbirth
- As a result of the menopause
- Through lack of exercise
- Following pelvic surgery
- Repetitive straining to open your bowels
- Persistent heavy lifting
- By being overweight
- Having a chronic cough

How do I do my Pelvic Floor Muscle exercises?

With practice pelvic floor muscle exercises can be done anywhere and anytime, but it does take time to concentrate on them and it is best to learn the exercises in the following position:

- Sitting on a chair or lying down
- If sitting make sure your feet are flat on the floor with your legs slight apart
- It can sometimes help to lean forward, resting your elbows on your knees

Imagine trying to close your back passage as if you were trying to hold in wind. At the same time try and imagine stopping yourself from passing urine. This involves tightening and lifting the muscles around your back passage, vagina and front passage. You should feel a sensation of “squeeze and lift”.

Try and avoid:

- Holding your breath.
- Pulling your tummy in (a slight tightening is fine).
- Squeezing your legs together.
- Tightening your buttocks.

Only the pelvic floor muscles should be working. The exercises are often referred to as a ‘secret exercise’ - no one can see that you are doing them. DO NOT try to stop the flow of urine when passing urine.

How do I exercise my Pelvic Floor Muscle?

There are two exercises you need to do to strengthen the pelvic floor muscle.

Exercise 1 (Endurance/Slow)

Slowly tighten and lift the pelvic floor muscle and hold for as many seconds as you can (up to 10seconds)

Relax for 4 seconds between each squeeze.

Exercise 2 (Power/Quick)

Tighten and relax the pelvic floor muscle as quickly as you can (holding for approximately 1 second). Make sure you completely in-between each contraction. Repeat as many times as you can (up to 10 times)

Your Programme:

Repeat these exercises 3-5 times a day.

Slow exercises: Hold for.....secs

Repeat.....times

Quick exercises: Repeat.....times

It is often useful to use reminders or “cues” throughout the day. For example, before going to bed, whilst the kettle is boiling, post-it notes on your computer

How can I use my Pelvic Floor Muscles during the day?

When you cough, sneeze, laugh or pick something up, remember to tighten your pelvic floor muscle before and during these activities. This technique is called “the knack”. It can be used to try and reduce straining of the pelvic floor muscle and prevent leakage of urine.

How will I know if I am getting better?


It will take several weeks of regular exercise to strengthen your pelvic floor muscle; best results should be seen within 3 to 6 months.

Remember pelvic floor exercises are for life. If you stop doing them your symptoms may return. Training should become part of your daily routine.

You can now refer yourself for specialist NHS Physiotherapy

If you are female and over 16 please call 0300 0040 335 or email tsdft.physio.pelvichealth@nhs.net to make an appointment.

Useful contact

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact the Physiotherapy Department on  **Tel. (01803) 655340**

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.