

Like other muscle groups in the body, the pelvic floor has a range of movement. When we contract, or tighten the pelvic floor, it should lift and when we let go of the contraction the muscles should return to their resting position.

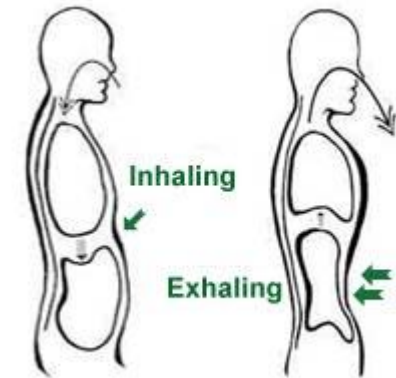
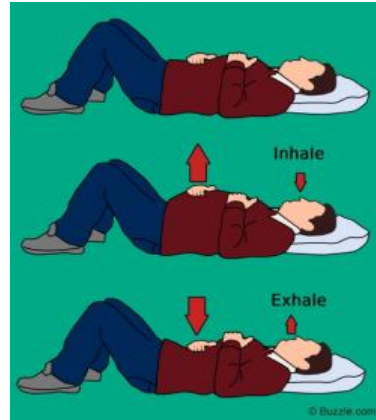
When muscles are not able to let go, this can also lead to pelvic dysfunction such as pain, bladder irritation and constipation.

Muscles function better when they are allowed a break. They need to relax to allow good blood flow, which brings oxygen and nutrient supplies.

But how exactly do you relax your pelvic floor?

First start by controlling your breathing....

1. Adopt a comfortable position, either lying with your knees bent or reclined sitting. Place one hand on your lower tummy and the other on your breast bone. Gently breathe in and imagine the air filling your stomach so that your lower hand gently rises.
2. Focus on breathing into your tummy so that your lower hand rises and falls and your upper hand stays relatively still.



Next:

Imagine your whole body as a canister that you are filling with air. To allow as much air in as possible, your tummy must gently expand as your ribs widen. At the same time, focus on the area between your sitting bones relaxing and widening to allow the pelvic floor muscles to lengthen out and let go.

Use your imagination to visualize the bones moving, creating more space for the pelvic floor muscles to lengthen during inhalation.

Then:

As you breathe out these areas gently recoil back to guide the air back out.

<u>Inhale</u>	<u>Exhale</u>
Tummy softens and expands	Tummy comes back towards body
Sitting bones widen, soften, float away from each other	Sitting bones come back together in the centre
Tailbone lengthens away from the pubic bone	Tailbone returns to centre towards pubic bone
Pelvic floor muscles lengthen out	Pelvic floor muscles come back in towards body

These exercises can take real concentration so put some quiet time aside to really focus on the coordination required. Once you are more confident they can be performed in any position and will contribute to improved overall function of your pelvic floor.

Other useful sources of information regarding pelvic floor relaxation and “letting go” can be found at:

www.pelvicphysiotherapy.com/release-exercises

or for breathing techniques a short video by Physiotherapist Michelle Kenway can be found on YouTube under the title “Pelvic Floor Relaxation Exercises for Pelvic Pain”.

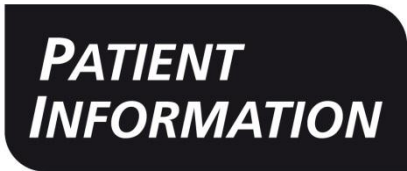
South Devon and Torbay NHS Healthcare Trust also has a great relaxation resource, designed by our pain team on its website:

<http://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/?s=relaxation>

Useful Contact:

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact the Physiotherapy Department on:

Tel. (01803) 655340



Exercises for Breathing and Pelvic Floor Relaxation