

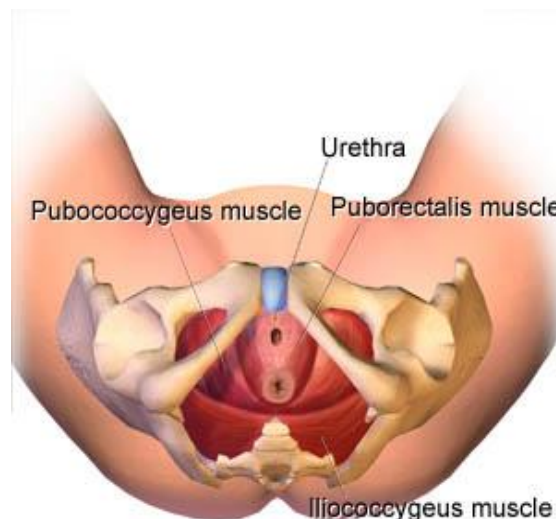
Pelvic Floor Exercise Instructions

(Information leaflet)

About the Pelvic Floor Muscles

The pelvic floor muscles form a broad sling between your legs from the pubic bone in front to the base of your spine at the back. They help to hold your bladder, uterus and bowel in place. These muscles also give you control over when you empty your bladder or move your bowel. They also help to withstand the pressure increases that occur when coughing, sneezing, lifting or straining, and help to increase sexual satisfaction for both partners.

Many factors contribute to weakening of the pelvic muscles' the most important being childbirth, where the muscles, nerves and ligaments are directly traumatised, and the menopause when waning of ovarian function reduces hormone levels which normally serve to maintain muscular strength. Other factors including obesity, constipation and chronic cough also contribute to pelvic muscle weakness.



Female Pelvic Muscles

How to do pelvic muscle exercise

A good way to learn the exercise is to imagine that you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind and trying to stop your flow of urine mid-stream, at the same time. The feeling is one of "squeeze and lift", closing and drawing up the front and back passages. Think about the way you tighten (or contract) the muscles to keep the thing from escaping. Another way is to pretend that you are lying on your back, with knees bent and wide apart. Imagine that someone is trying to stick a needle into the area between the vagina and anus. Try to pull this vaginal area away from the needle, back inside your body. Don't hold your breath and make sure that your bottom is relaxed.

How to gain the best results

1. Maximal effort needs to be put into each contraction
2. Try to contract only the pelvic muscles. Of course, that sounds easy enough. But the catch is that you have to squeeze and lift without:
 - pulling in your tummy
 - squeezing your legs together
 - tightening your buttocks
 - holding your breathIn other words, only your pelvic floor muscles should be working. If you feel your abdomen, thighs or buttocks tightening, relax, aim just for the pelvic muscles, and use a less intense muscle contraction.
3. Initially hold each contraction for 2 seconds, then for 4, 6, 8 & 20 seconds, as your muscles get stronger. Ten contractions in one "set" is ideal.
4. Rest for at least 10 seconds (longer if you need to) between each contraction, so that each one is as strong as you can make it.
5. To start with, aim to practice your exercises in a quiet place as described earlier, at least four times a day, but then try to do as many as you can as you go about your daily routine. This can be easily done anytime you remember, no matter whether sitting, standing or lying or doing anything eg. during commercials on TV, at the red lights when driving, preparing food for your family or when you finish going to the toilet.

6. You may forget for several days at a time. Don't get discouraged. Just resume the program and remind yourself that every day that you do the exercises helps your muscles get into better shape

Monitor your progress

Once you have learned the correct pelvic muscle contraction technique, use your pelvic floor muscles when you are afraid you might leak – before you sneeze or lift something heavy. Your control will gradually improve. But it takes time, maybe 12-16 weeks. Expect to exercise for at least 3-4 weeks before you see evidence of improvement. This is a major commitment, but there is a good chance that the program will help you avoid surgery or medication that has unpleasant side effects.

!!AGAIN TO REMIND YOU!!

10 CONTRACTIONS, FOR 10 SECONDS AT A TIME WITH 10 SECONDS REST BETWEEN EACH CONTRACTION, 4 TIMES A DAY.

GOOD LUCK