

PATIENT INFORMATION

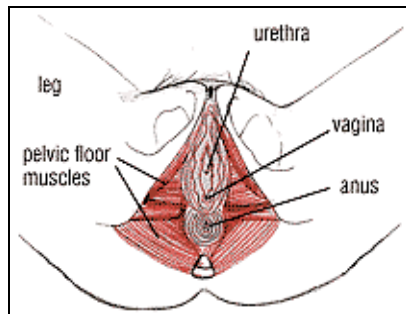
EXERCISING YOUR PELVIC MUSCLES

Why exercise pelvic muscles?

- Women with bladder control problems can regain control through pelvic muscle exercises, also called Kegel exercises. Pelvic floor muscles are just like other muscles. Exercise can make them stronger.
- Exercising your pelvic floor muscles for just 5 minutes, 3 times a day can make a big difference to your bladder control.

How do you exercise your pelvic muscles?

- Find the right muscles illustrated below. The goal is to tighten the 2 major muscles that stretch across your pelvic floor. In day to day life, we usually are unaware of how to tighten these muscles, so women need to learn how to identify them:



You can make these pelvic floor muscles stronger with a few minutes of exercise every day.

Step 1: Learning to Feel the Muscles

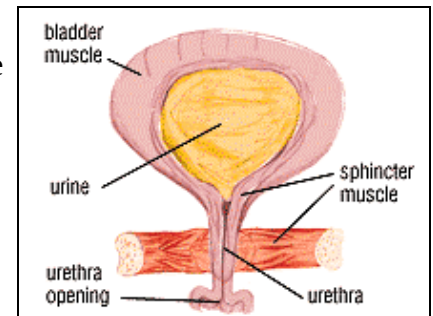
- Try to stop the flow of urine when you are sitting on the toilet.
- Imagine that you are trying to stop passing gas. Squeeze the muscles you would use.

Step 2: Learning to Isolate the Muscles

- Be careful not to tighten your stomach, legs, or other muscles at the same time as you are contracting your pelvic muscles. In particular, try to relax your stomach while you squeeze the pelvic muscles. Don't hold your breath.

Step 3: Start Practicing Your Pelvic Exercises

- Pull in the pelvic muscles and hold for a count of 3. Then relax for a count of 3. Work up to **10 to 15 repeats (“one set”) 3 times per day.**
- Try to practice in 3 different positions. If convenient, do one set lying, one set sitting, and one set standing. If doing your exercises in 3 positions is inconvenient, just do them where you feel most comfortable. You can exercise while lying on the bed or couch, sitting at a desk, couch or chair, or standing anywhere.



When Will I Notice Improvement?

- Many women do notice an improvement after a few weeks. However, you may not feel your bladder control improve until after **3 to 6 weeks** of doing the exercises 3 times per day.

Healthy sphincter muscles can keep the urethra closed.

For more information, contact:

National Association for Continence www.nafc.org (800) BLADDER

The Simon Foundation for Continence www.simonfoundation.org (800) 23-SIMON

American Urological Association www.aua.net.org (410) 727-1000