

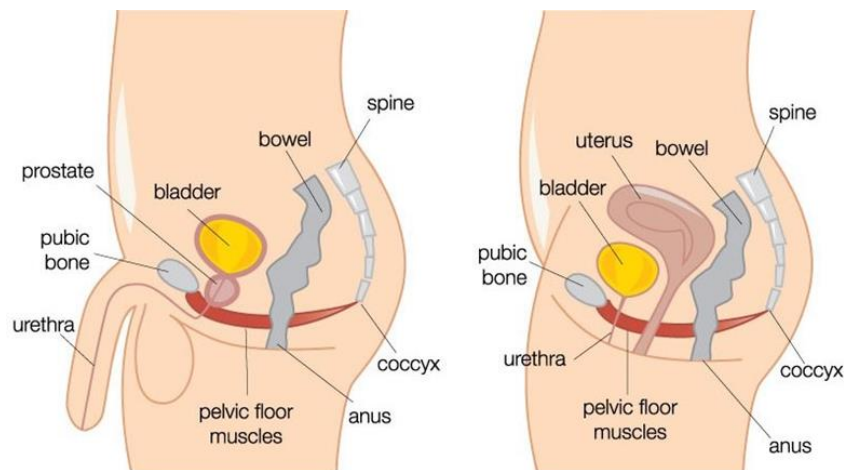
Pelvic Floor (Kegel) Exercises

The pelvic floor muscles can be weakened from pregnancy, cancer treatment, obesity, pelvic injuries, frequent straining, constipation, and advanced age. Pelvic floor, or Kegel, exercises can help to strengthen these muscles and regain continence.

What are the pelvic floor muscles?

The pelvic floor muscles are formed by several layers of muscles that make up the floor of the pelvis. They act like a hammock that travels from the front of the pelvis to the tailbone and provide several key functions.

- Supporting the abdomino-pelvic contents (bladder, uterus, rectum)
- To aid in the stopping and starting of urine, stool and gas through sphincter control
- To aid in sexual function



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Practice finding your pelvic floor muscles

Imagine you are trying to stop your urine flow or hold back gas by contracting your pelvic floor muscles. These exercises are also referred to as Kegels. If you are performing them correctly, you should feel an “inward and upward” motion by your rectum and vaginal opening. Be sure not to squeeze any of the larger surrounding muscles such as your buttocks, thighs, or abdominals.

Women can identify the muscles by inserting 1 or 2 fingers at the opening of the vagina and feel the muscles contract and lift. Men can place a finger by the outside of the anus and feel the same “up and in” motion of the muscles. You can also use a mirror to view the outside of the vagina and rectum and see the motion of the muscles “lift and squeeze.” If you see a bulge or movement outwards then you are performing the contraction incorrectly.

Another way to see if you are performing the exercise correctly is the Urine Stop Test. While on the toilet, try to stop your urine flow midstream. If your muscles are strong, you will be able to stop your urine flow

immediately. Don't make a habit of using Kegel exercises to stop your urine stream. Doing Kegel exercises while emptying your bladder can lead to incomplete emptying of the bladder, which increases the risk of a urinary tract infection.

Pelvic floor exercises

It is important to practice both quick contractions and long holds. To get the full function of the muscle, you need to relax them completely between each repetition. You can begin the exercises by lying on your back and then progress to sitting and standing.

Quick flicks

Practice contracting the pelvic floor quickly holding for about 2 seconds and then completely relaxing the muscles for 15 seconds. You should feel that same "up and in" motion by the vaginal opening and rectum without using your buttocks or abdominals. You can begin by repeating this 10 times per set and doing this 2-3 times throughout the day.



Long holds

Another goal is to be able to contract and hold the pelvic floor muscles for several seconds without using any of the larger surrounding muscles. Without holding your breath, try to Kegel and maintain the contraction for up to 5 seconds. Completely relax between contractions and then repeat up to 10 times. Once this is easy to do, you can increase the time held to 7 seconds, then 10 seconds. The goal should be to perform 1 to 3 sets of ten 10-second holds.

Adductor squeeze

While lying on your back, place a pillow between your legs. Contract your pelvic floor muscle and hold for 3-5 seconds while squeezing the pillow between your knees at the same time.



Relax your muscles while moving your knees back to the starting position. Rest for 3 seconds between repetitions. Perform 10-15 reps 2 times per day.

Questions

Please contact your healthcare team with any questions about performing these exercises.

If you are in need of immediate assistance, please call 732-235-2465 and select the option that best meets your needs.