

Pelvic Muscle Exercises (Kegel exercises)

Purpose: To restore tone and function of atrophied pelvic muscles. This helps control involuntary loss of urine with physical activity such as a cough, sneeze, or laugh.

Anatomy: The pubococcygeal muscle acts as a sling from the pubic bone, (front) to the coccyx (tailbone) and encircles the urethra, vagina, and rectum. Location of this muscle can be obtained by voluntarily stopping the stream of urine when you empty your bladder or by placing your finger in your vagina and squeezing around your finger.

Steps to perform pelvic muscle exercises:

1. Empty your bladder.
2. Try to relax completely. (These exercises can be done anywhere, anytime, and any position. Consider right after voiding, standing in a line, washing dishes, sitting at a stoplight, watching a commercial)
3. Tighten the pelvic floor muscle and hold for up to 10 seconds, then relax for an equal number of seconds. At first you may be able to hold it only 1 or 2 seconds. This should increase with time. (You should feel a sensation of lifting around your vagina or pulling around your rectum.)
4. Try and do these exercises for 10-minute sessions two times per day.

Reminders:

- Do not use your stomach, legs, or buttock muscles. Place your hand on your stomach while doing these exercises. If you feel your stomach move then you are using the wrong muscles.
- Not all women can hold a 10 second contraction at first. After a digital vaginal exam, the nurse or physician can guide you as to how long of a contraction is appropriate for you.
- Always rest the same amount of time you contract your pelvic muscles to avoid muscle fatigue.
- Expected results vary, but after 2 weeks of daily pelvic muscle exercises you should notice some improvement with urinary incontinence. Significant improvement can be expected after 12 weeks of training.