

PELVIC MUSCLE EXERCISES (KEGEL EXERCISES)

These exercises will strengthen the muscles (called pelvic floor muscles) that help control the flow of urine from the bladder. When you first start doing these exercises, find a quiet place to relax. This helps you exercise the correct muscles. It may take some time to get the right muscles.

LOCATING THE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

1. To locate the muscles, it is best to sit down. Sit forward and spread your knees and feet apart. You can place your elbows on your knees if you wish.
2. Try to tightly squeeze the muscles which prevent you from passing rectal gas. (It may help to close your eyes and imagine that you have diarrhea.) These are the muscles that squeeze both the urethra (around the opening to the bladder) and the anus (the opening to the bowel).
3. Try not to tighten your abdominal and buttock muscles while you squeezing the pelvic floor muscles. Do not hold your breath.

DOING THE EXERCISES

To do 1 pelvic muscle exercise, follow these steps:

1. Squeeze your pelvic muscles.
2. Hold and count slowly..... 1 and 2 and 3 and
3. Relax and count slowly..... 1 and 2 and 3

[Note: You must try to relax your muscles for the same amount of time that you squeeze the muscles.]

10 exercises together are called 1 set. Do 1 set 5 times a day.

As you get better at doing these exercises, you can count to 5 and then relax for a count of 5

After you get used to doing these exercises, you can do them any time, any place, in any position. You can do them while lying, sitting or standing.

Please Note: Trying to stop and start while passing urine is no longer recommended as a method of strengthening pelvic muscles. However, to prevent accidental leakage of urine, do squeeze these pelvic muscles each time that you laugh, cough, sneeze, exercise, and lift or push a heavy object.

Hints for remembering to do your exercises

Do your exercises:

- ✓ During commercials when watching TV.
- ✓ While driving in the car, to music on the radio.
- ✓ Before going to sleep or first thing in the morning.

No one will be aware that you are doing the exercises, so you can repeat them frequently.

Adapted from "Behavioural Therapies for Urinary Incontinence"⁴²; BC Health Guide, Pelvic floor (Kegel) exercises for urinary incontinence in women <www.bchealthguide.org/kbase/topic/detail/other/hw220109/detail.htm>; Personal communication, Jennifer Skelly 2007.

