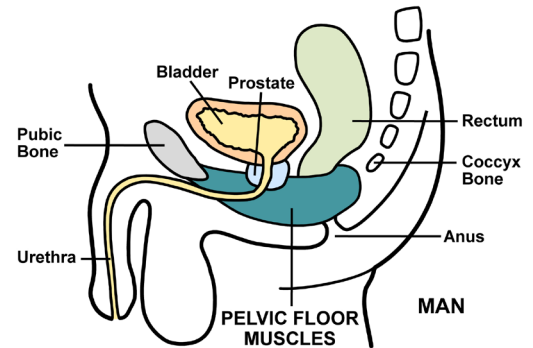
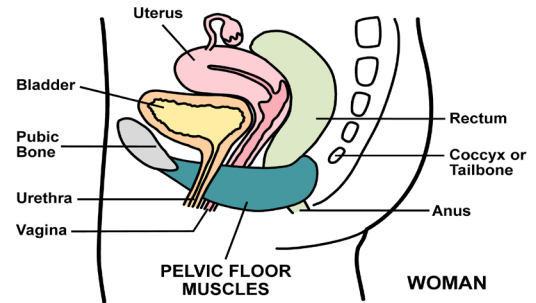


How to Do Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises

WHAT ARE THE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES?

Your pelvic floor muscles provide support to your bladder, and rectum. In women, they go around the vagina and support the uterus. In men, they surround the prostate gland. These muscles are like a sling or hammock in the bottom of your pelvic area which is why they are called pelvic *floor* muscles. If they weaken or are damaged, they do not support the pelvic organs and may cause bladder control problems. Keeping the muscles strong by training them can help prevent urine leakage. You can make these muscles stronger by doing exercises (often called *Keegel* exercises).



FINDING THE PELVIC MUSCLES

Without tensing the muscles of your leg, buttocks or stomach, imagine that you are trying to control the passing of gas or pinching off a stool. Or imagine you are in an elevator full of people and you feel the urge to pass gas. What do you do? You squeeze or pull in the ring of muscles around your rectum—these are your pelvic muscles. Women may feel a lifting sensation in the area around the vagina, men may feel their scrotum or penis move and both men and women may feel the rectum pulling in.

TYPES OF EXERCISES

There are 2 type of muscle contractions or squeezes you will need to practice –

Quick (2 second) or **fast** contractions and **Slow** (start with 5 second squeezes building to 10 second squeezes) or **long** contractions. To do the short or quick muscle contractions, contract or tighten your pelvic muscle quickly and hard following by relaxing the muscle. For the slow or long (sustained) contractions, contract or tighten your pelvic muscle and hold for a count of 5 to 10 seconds, then relax the muscle completely for the same amount of time.

One exercise is “tightening or squeezing” followed by “relaxing” the muscle. It is equally important to control when your muscle tightens and relaxes so be sure to relax completely between each muscle tightening.

WHERE TO PRACTICE

You can do the exercises anywhere and anytime. You can do the exercises in these positions:

- **Lying Down** - Lie on your back, flat or with your head on a pillow, knees bent and feet separated slightly. It is helpful to support your knees with a pillow.
- **Sitting** - Sit in a chair with a firm seat and straight-back, knees a little apart, feet flat on the floor or legs stretched out in front and crossed at the ankles.
- **Standing** - Stand at the back of a chair, lean over, knees a little bent and toes slightly pointed outward. You can also lean on the kitchen counter or a dresser.

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TIMES TO USE THE MUSCLE

If you leak urine in one specific position only, like when standing, then follow these steps:

- Increase the number of exercises for that position, or
- Add additional exercises each day in that position
- If you have overactive bladder symptoms of strong urgency to empty your bladder, squeeze your pelvic floor muscles a couple of times. Often, this will quiet the bladder down and the urge to empty your bladder will pass. Then, once that urge is not as strong, walk calmly and slowly to the bathroom.

Common Mistakes

- Squeeze only the pelvic floor muscles. DO NOT squeeze your thighs, buttocks, or stomach. If you feel your stomach move, then you are also using these muscles.
- DO NOT hold your breath. Breathe like normal or count out loud or both.

Can These Exercises Harm Me?

No, these exercises should not harm you in any way. You should find them easy and relaxing. If you get back or stomach pain after you exercise, you are probably trying too hard and using your stomach muscles. If you get headaches, then you are also tensing your chest muscles and probably holding your breath.

When Will You See a Change?

It takes effort and time to make any muscle stronger. When you start, your muscles may be very weak, and you may not be able to hold the muscle squeeze even for a second. Don't get upset as with practice, you will get better.

After 4–6 weeks of exercising every day, you may begin to notice more bladder control and less urine leakage. But it may take 3 or 4 months to really notice a change in your bladder symptoms. Make the exercises part of your life. Squeeze the muscles when you walk, as you stand up, and as you walk to the bathroom.