

Pelvic floor muscle exercises for women

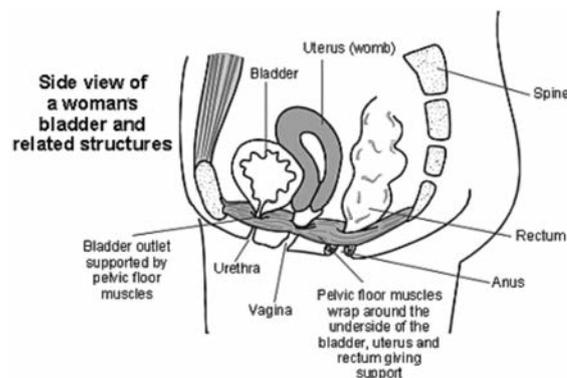
Information and advice

What are the pelvic floor muscles and what do they do?

The pelvic floor forms a sling of muscles, which are attached to the pubic bone at the front of the pelvis and the tail bone (coccyx), at the back. They have three openings, one at the front from the bladder (urethra), one in the middle from the birth canal (vagina) and one at the back from the bowel (rectum).

The pelvic floor muscles have two types of muscle fibres in them:

- Slow twitch muscle fibres, which have constant tone in them (even while you are asleep). They support your pelvic organs up inside you and work to keep water (urine) inside your bladder until you find a suitable place to pass it.
- Fast twitch muscle fibres, which contract strongly and quickly to prevent leakage of urine when there is extra pressure on the bladder e.g. when you cough, sneeze, laugh or lift something heavy.



Pelvic floor muscle exercises

1. Sit on a firm chair or stool with your knees slightly apart in good posture.
Tighten the ring of muscle around your back passage (anus) as though preventing a bowel movement or wind escape
Lift the muscles up inside
Hold, then...relax slowly
2. In the same position, imagine you have to stop yourself passing urine.
Tighten the muscles around your front passages
Lift the muscles up inside
Hold, then....relax slowly
(**Do not** attempt this whilst passing water as it increases the risk of infections)

Now you are ready to try the basic pelvic floor exercises.

In the same position,

Tighten the muscles around your back passage and front passages

Lift the muscles up inside

Hold, then...relax slowly

Repeat several times remembering to keep your tummy, buttocks and thigh muscles relaxed and don't forget to keep breathing throughout the exercise.

The exercise programme

1. First determine your 'starting block'.

Tighten your pelvic floor muscles as described in the basic pelvic floor exercises

Hold for as many seconds as you can (up to a maximum of 10 seconds) but remember not to hold your breath

Relax the contraction and rest for four seconds

Repeat the **tightening, hold** and **relax** as many times as you can (up to a maximum of 10).

How long could you hold the contraction for? seconds

How many times could you repeat the contraction?

So, your 'starting block' becomes

e.g. seconds repetitions

Repeat your 'starting block' between three to six times a day. As a result of this muscle training, your pelvic floor will get stronger and your 'starting block' will change.

2. It is important that the muscles are able to react quickly when, for example you cough or sneeze.

How many quick contractions can you do? repetitions

Aim to increase this number up to a maximum of 10

So, your 'starting block' becomes

e.g. seconds repetitions

Repeat your 'starting block' between three to six times a day. As a result of this muscle training your pelvic floor will get stronger and your 'starting block' will change.

The pelvic floor muscles work with your lower abdominal muscles. Therefore as you draw up your pelvic floor muscles, you should feel your lower abdomen draw in slightly.

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