

# Pelvic Floor Exercises

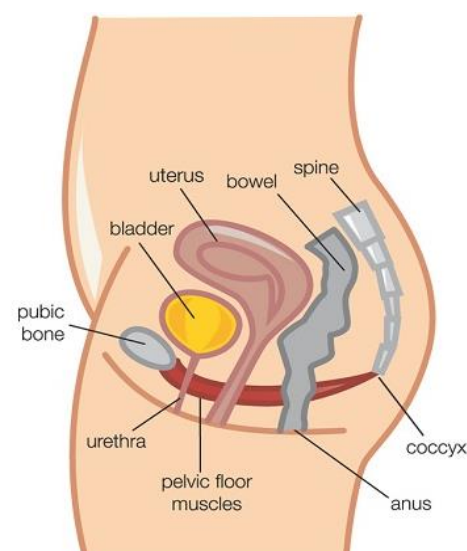
## Physiotherapy Patient Information

### What are your pelvic floor muscles?

The pelvic floor muscles form a supportive sling at the base of the pelvis. They run from the pubic bone to your tailbone, the coccyx. They support your bladder, vagina and anus. They play a vital role in childbirth, sexual function and bladder and bowel function.

### What are the symptoms of a weak pelvic floor?

- A tendency to leak urine when you cough, laugh or sneeze (called stress urinary incontinence)
- An urgent need to visit the toilet and leaking before you get there or if you do not go (called urge incontinence)
- An urgent need to visit the toilet to empty your bowels and leaking faeces before you get there (called urge faecal incontinence)
- Aching or dragging sensation in your vagina
- A lack of sensation during sexual intercourse



### How to help your bladder:

- Drink more water: 1.5 to 2 litres per day
- Reduce or eliminate caffeine, sugary drinks and fruit juices
- Do not empty your bladder until you are sure you need to go. When you do go take your time. You may need to slowly rock or lean forward whilst sitting on the toilet
- Actively take steps to lose weight if you are overweight. This will reduce the strain on your pelvic floor muscles
- Avoid constipation and straining. This stretches the muscles and lessens the supportive action of the muscles



## How to do your pelvic floor exercises:

There are two types of exercise you need to do: – endurance and speed exercises. The best way to learn them is in the following positions, the easiest first:

1. Lying with your knees bent
2. Sitting on a chair or toilet. Feet flat, legs slightly apart and sit up, and lean forwards from your hips.
3. Standing
4. During everyday movement

### Finding your pelvic floor muscles:

It is not always easy to find and squeeze just your pelvic floor muscles. Your therapist will teach you how to do this. Ensure you do not:

- Hold your breath
- Pull in your tummy muscles too much
- Clench your buttocks together
- Squeeze your knees together

### 1. Endurance exercises

Endurance pelvic floor exercises aim to help you support your pelvic organs and hold a full bladder.

Start with two relaxed breaths:

- ✓ Breathe in through your nose for 3-4 seconds keeping your pelvic floor relaxed
- ✓ As you breathe out through your mouth, lift and squeeze your back passage as if you are stopping passing wind. Then lift and squeeze the front of the pelvic floor, as if you were also stopping the flow of urine.
- ✓ Hold for \_\_\_\_ secs. *Relax at the end of your breath*

Perform \_\_\_\_ repetitions: increase as able, up to 10

### 2. Speed exercises

Strength and speed pelvic floor exercises aim to help your pelvic floor react quickly to sudden changes in pressure, for example, when you cough or sneeze.

Start with two relaxed breaths:

- ✓ Quickly squeeze and lift your pelvic floor muscles then release completely whilst you continue to breathe

Perform \_\_\_\_ repetition: increase as able, up to 10

## When to do your pelvic floor exercises

Aim for 3 times a day. It may take several months of regular exercise to regain the strength in your pelvic floor muscles. You will need to continue to do these exercises once a day in the long term to ensure your problems do not return. Incorporate them as part of your daily routine, for example - after you have emptied your bladder (not before or during emptying), when you wash your hands or clean your teeth.

## How to perform the 'Knack'

The 'Knack' is when you tighten your pelvic floor muscles before you cough or sneeze, lift, carry or stand up. Your therapist will advise you on whether this will be helpful for you.

Please note that these exercises are a guide and an individualised assessment and exercise programme is sometimes required.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to call Physiotherapy reception on (01225) 821241. They will be able to direct you to your Physiotherapist.

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