

Information for Patients

Pelvic Floor Exercises for Women

The following information is designed to help you in exercising your pelvic floor muscles. The exercises can dramatically assist you in your efforts to achieve dryness when performed correctly.

What is the pelvic floor?

The pelvic floor is the layer of muscle stretching from the pubic bone in the front to the tail bone at the back and forming the floor of the pelvis. This is the main support structure for the pelvic organs including the bladder and bowel.

- The pelvic floor muscles contract when you cough, sneeze or strain, helping to prevent the involuntary leakage of urine.
- They help to support the organs in your abdomen, especially when you are standing.
- They help to protect the pelvic organs from external damage.
- They help to hold the pelvic organs, like the bladder, in the correct position.
- They help in the control of passing of urine, gas, and bowel motions.
- They play a role in sexual function during intercourse.

In order for the pelvic floor muscles to carry out their function well, they need to be fit and adequately toned just like any other muscle in the body.

What if my pelvic floor muscles are weak?

A weakness of the pelvic floor muscles may cause or worsen a number of problems including:

1. Stress urinary incontinence. The complaint of involuntary loss of urine on effort or physical exertion, including sporting activities etc., or on sneezing or coughing.
 2. Urge urinary incontinence. The complaint of involuntary loss of urine associated with a sudden urgent need to pass urine.
 3. Mixed urgency and stress incontinence. The complaint of involuntary loss of urine associated with urgency and also with effort or physical exertion, or on sneezing or coughing.
 4. Pelvic Organ Prolapse. Leading to a bulging of the bladder or bowel, or uterus (womb) into the vagina or out of the vaginal entrance if more severe.
 5. A loss in sexual sensation or feeling of vaginal looseness.
- 

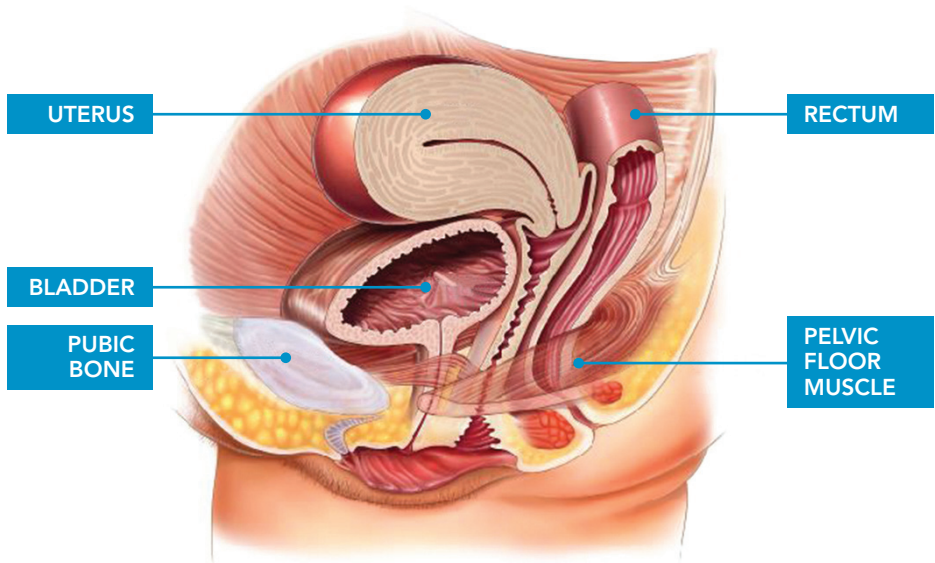
What causes pelvic floor weakness?

1. Under use. Like all muscles, the pelvic floor muscles need exercise to work well. Regular and adequate intensive exercise of the pelvic floor muscles should be maintained all through life (not just after having children) and is therefore very important.
2. Damage to the muscles during pregnancy and childbirth
3. The change in hormones associated with menopause might play a role in weakening the muscles but is still debatable.
4. Decreased muscle tone with aging.
5. Damage to the muscles through long term straining when constipated or associated with a chronic cough or obesity.

Identifying the pelvic floor muscles

To identify the muscles, sit or lie down comfortably. Your thighs, buttocks and tummy muscles should be relaxed. Imagine you are trying to hold back urine and wind from the back passage.

Lift and squeeze, or tighten and draw in and up, around your anus (back passage) and urethra (water pipe). You are aiming to feel a definite squeeze and lift action of your pelvic floor.



Starting your pelvic floor muscle training program

The exercise programme should reflect your individual muscle fitness and ability. At first you may need to perform these exercises while sitting or lying down. As the muscles strengthen you can progress to exercise while standing.

To begin the exercise program

Firstly

The programme is made up of “long contractions”, rest periods and “fast contractions”.

Remember

Always do your maximum number of **QUALITY** contractions

- Do NOT hold your breath.
- Do NOT push down instead of squeeze and lift.
- Do NOT pull your tummy in tightly.
- Do NOT tighten your buttocks and thighs.

STEP ONE

Lift Up inside and **HOLD** for 2 seconds (keep breathing).

Relax for 8 seconds (you should have a definite feeling of letting go).

STEP TWO

Repeat Step One 5 times.

Aim to perform this group of exercises **5-10 times per day**. At the beginning, 3 times a day is suitable.



Progressing your program

Good results take time and effort.

- Improvement in pelvic floor muscle strength can take 3-6 months of regular training of the muscles.
- Each fortnight aim to increase the duration of your hold/contraction and the frequency of contractions.
- Work towards 10 long and strong holds.

Pelvic floor exercises may also be useful for people on a bladder retraining programme.

Remember to tighten these muscles when you lift/laugh/cough/get up out of a chair etc.

urology

associates

George Acland
MB ChB, FRACS
Urologist

Kevin Bax
MB ChB, FRACS
Urologist

Nick Buchan
MB ChB, FRACS
Urologist

Deborah Friberg
MB ChB, FRACS
Urologist

Frank Kueppers
Dr. med.
Urologist

Giovanni Losco
MB ChB, FRACS
Adult & Paediatric
Urologist

Jane MacDonald
MB ChB, FRACS
Urologist

Stephen Mark
MB ChB, FRACS
Adult & Paediatric
Urologist

Louise Rouse
BHB, MB ChB, FRACS
Urologist

Urology Associates

Forte Health, 132 Peterborough Street
PO Box 917, Christchurch 8140

P: 03 355 5129

E: reception@urology.co.nz

www.urology.co.nz