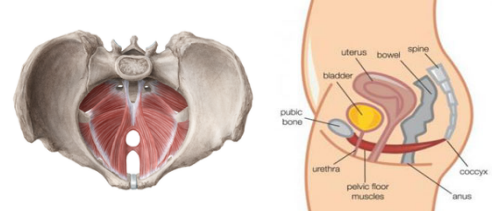


### WHAT ARE THE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES?

If you imagine your pelvis like a bowl, with the bones forming the curved sides, the pelvic floor muscles would form the base of the bowl. These muscles support your pelvic organs (bladder, bowel, uterus), help to maintain continence, and they produce the muscular contractions felt during sex and climax.



### HOW TO CONTRACT YOUR PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

- If you have weak pelvic floor muscles e.g. after childbirth or gynaecological surgery, it is better to start practicing pelvic floor contractions in lying. You can progress to sitting or standing contractions as you get stronger.
- There are several different types of pelvic floor squeezes you can try
  - Imagine you are trying to hold in wind. Think of puckering your anus and pulling it upwards.
  - Imagine you are trying to stop the flow of urine and squeeze your urine tube (urethra) shut.
  - Imaging you are trying to close the opening of your vagina.
  - Imaging you are trying to lift the point between your vagina and your anus up towards your head.
- Keep your buttocks and inner thighs relaxed whilst tightening your pelvic floor muscles.
- Avoid holding your breath while you practice. Holding your breath creates extra pressure in your abdomen that pushes down on your pelvic floor.
- Make sure you feel a dropping and widening when you relax your pelvic floor muscles.

### HOW TO CHECK THAT YOU ARE DOING YOUR EXERCISES CORRECTLY

1. The pelvic floor muscles help to stop the flow of urine. To test that you are doing your exercises correctly, try to stop the flow of urine when you next go to the toilet. *Only do this once as a test and not as part of your exercise program.*
2. Another way to test if you are activating properly is to insert 1 or 2 fingers into the vagina and contract your pelvic floor muscles. You should feel the muscles squeeze around your finger and a slight inward pull.
3. You can also check with a mirror and watch for your perineum (the bit of tissue between your vagina and anus), you should see your perineum draw up in.

### HOW TO START A PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING PROGRAM



- Start by squeezing as hard as you can for as long as you can. Count the seconds until you feel that you can no longer hold a maximum squeeze (up to 10 seconds). Let's call this number of seconds 'A'.
- Next, keep repeating the squeeze for A seconds (up to 10 repetitions) until you feel you are fatiguing before the end of A seconds. The amount of repetitions you completed is number 'B'. Give yourself 10 seconds recovery between each repetition.
- It might be best to do your exercises at night so your pelvic floor can recover while you sleep.



# WOMEN

## PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING FOR WOMEN



### PROGRESSING YOUR PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING PROGRAM

- A) First aim to make the number of repetitions you can hold B = 10
- B) Then aim to make the duration of your hold in seconds A = 10
- C) Once you are able to do a set of 10 x 10 second holds with 10 second rest between repetitions, start decreasing your rest time by 1 seconds every few days.
- D) Once you are able to do a set of 10 x 10 second holds with minimal rest, you can then add 10 quick contractions to the end of your set.
  - These contractions help prevent leakage when you cough or sneeze. **These contractions should be done as quickly and as strongly as you can.**
- E) Once you are able to do 3 sets of 10 x 10 second holds, then add a long hold of up to 60 seconds to your program.
  - This helps with endurance of your pelvic floor muscles, which is often needed if you have a full bladder and need to hold for a while whilst you get to a toilet – like when you are in a large shopping centre or going for a long drive.

### AN EXAMPLE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING PROGRAM

Start example	3 second hold time -(A)	10 seconds rest	5 contractions -(B)	3 sets per day
<b>Progression 1</b>	As you are improving <b>slowly increase your number of contractions (B)</b> until you can achieve 10 contractions of your hold time (A). E.g. Build from 5 contractions of 3 seconds up to 10 contractions of 3 seconds.			
<b>Progression 2</b>	Once you are able to achieve 10 holds <b>then increase the length of time of each hold (A)</b> . Start with a second at a time. E.g. From 10 x 3 second holds to 10 x 4 second holds. Slowly increasing the hold time until you can hold 10 seconds x 10 times. Still maintaining a 10 second rest time.			
<b>Progression 3</b>	Once you have achieved this then decrease your rest time slowly down to 2 seconds			
<b>Progression 4</b>	Once you have achieved this add 10 quick contractions into your program at the end of your 10 second holds to retrain the muscle to fire quickly and maximally.			
<b>Progression 5</b>	Now you are ready to try 2 sets in a row with a 1-2 minute break in between sets. When you can complete 2 sets of 10 x 10 second holds try progression 6.			
<b>Progression 6</b>	Try 3 sets in a row with a 1-2 minute break in between each set. Remember to do your set of 10 quick contractions at the end of each set.			
<b>Progression 7</b>	Once you can complete 3 sets of 10 x 10 second holds followed by a 10 quick contractions in each set try adding one long hold of up to 60 seconds to the beginning or end of your program.			
<b>CONGRATULATIONS</b>	Your pelvic floor strength is now considered to be normal. It is not unusual for this process to take between 4-6 months. Once your pelvic floor is at normal strength you can drop down to 2 sets daily as an ongoing program or you can just check your pelvic floor has maintained normal strength once every few months. Be patient and keep going till you get your pelvic floor muscles back to normal. This is crucial for any subsequent pregnancies you may wish to have and for reducing your risk of developing incontinence and prolapse.			