

Pelvic floor health

The pelvic floor plays a crucial role in **supporting pelvic organs, maintaining continence, and contributing to overall well-being**. When the pelvic floor muscles weaken or become dysfunctional, it can lead to various health concerns, including stress urinary incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, and chronic pelvic pain. This article provides an in-depth yet easy-to-understand overview of pelvic floor function, disorders, and effective exercises to improve pelvic floor health.

What you will learn

Press on the **green square** to navigate through the article

PFMT

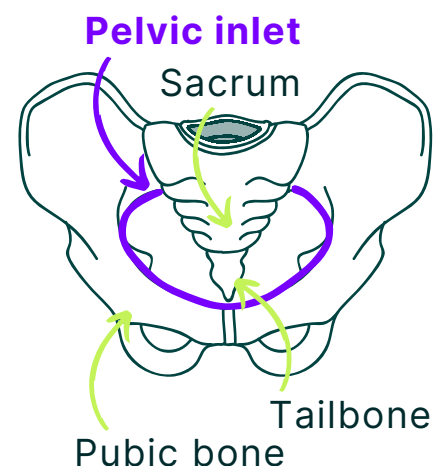
Exercises importance

Pregnancy

Urinary incontinence

What is the Pelvic floor?

The pelvic floor is a dome-shaped **structure made up of muscles, nerves, ligaments, and fascia**. It spans from the pubic bone in the front to the tailbone at the back, providing support for the bladder, uterus, and rectum. The pelvic floor allows passage of the urethra, vagina (in women), and anal canal while maintaining control over these openings.



Functions of the Pelvic floor

Supporting Pelvic Organs

The pelvic floor acts as a "floor" for the abdominal organs, preventing them from descending due to intra-abdominal pressure.

Maintaining Continence

The muscles provide a constrictor mechanism that helps control urination, defecation, and sexual function.

Pelvic floor dysfunction

Pelvic floor dysfunction can manifest in multiple ways, including:

Bladder dysfunction: Stress urinary incontinence, urgency, or frequency

Bowel dysfunction: Constipation or fecal incontinence

Pelvic organ prolapse: Descent of the bladder, uterus, or rectum

Sexual dysfunction: Pain during intercourse, decreased sensation

Pelvic pain: Chronic discomfort or pressure in the pelvic region

Pelvic floor damage often occurs due to **childbirth, aging, high-impact activities, or nerve injuries**, leading to impaired function.

Pelvic Floor Muscle Training (PFMT)

PFMT is a first-line treatment for many pelvic floor disorders. Regular pelvic floor exercises **improve muscle strength, endurance, and relaxation, reducing symptoms of incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse.**



Effective exercises

Kegel Exercises

Repeated contractions of the pelvic floor muscles to improve strength and coordination.

High-Low Impact Aerobics with Pelvic Floor Exercises

Combination exercises to enhance neuromuscular activity without compromising continence.

Electrical Stimulation

Low-grade electrical impulses to stimulate contractions in weak muscles.

The Knack Maneuver

A well-timed pelvic contraction before sneezing, coughing, or jumping to prevent leakage.

Biofeedback-Assisted Training

Using sensors to help patients identify and control pelvic floor muscle contractions.

Press **play** to see the video of one of the pelvic floor exercises from our library!



Exercising and its impact on Pelvic health

The type and intensity of exercise play a significant role in pelvic floor function. High-impact activities (e.g., running, jumping) can increase the risk of stress urinary incontinence. Moderate-intensity exercise improves pelvic floor muscle contraction and support.

Exercise practitioners tend to have **greater bladder neck descent and larger hiatal areas, which may affect continence control**. Pregnant women benefit from a combination of high- and low-impact pelvic floor exercises to maintain muscle strength.

Pelvic floor and pregnancy

Pregnancy and childbirth are common causes of pelvic floor dysfunction due to increased pressure, hormonal changes, and muscle stretching.

Pregnancy **increases pelvic laxity** due to hormonal effects on ligaments.

Vaginal delivery can cause **stretching and possible nerve or muscle damage**.

Cesarean section **does not fully protect** against pelvic floor damage if labor was prolonged.

Postpartum recovery requires **targeted pelvic floor rehabilitation to restore function**.

It's recommended to perform conscious pelvic floor contractions during aerobics, low-impact exercises with pelvic muscle activation and strength training adapted for pregnancy.



If you experience persistent pelvic floor issues, consult a healthcare provider or pelvic floor therapist for personalized guidance.

Improving urinary incontinence

PFMT can significantly **reduce urinary incontinence and enhance the quality of life**. Success depends on:

Proper technique

Correct identification and activation of pelvic floor muscles.

Supervision

Supervised training yields better results than unsupervised programs.

Consistency

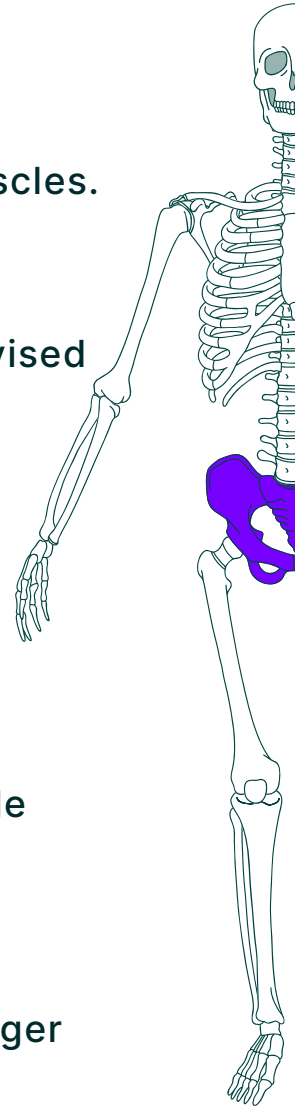
Performing exercises daily for 15-20 weeks for lasting benefits.

Supplemental Therapies

Biofeedback and electrical stimulation for better muscle control.

Anticipatory Contraction

Learning to contract muscles before activities that trigger leaks (e.g., lifting, sneezing).



Key takeaways

Pelvic floor health is crucial for bladder, bowel, and sexual function. Whether due to childbirth, aging, or high-impact activity, pelvic floor dysfunction can be managed effectively with proper training.

By incorporating evidence-based pelvic floor exercises into daily routines, individuals can improve their quality of life and reduce symptoms of incontinence and prolapse.

