

## How To Do Pelvic Muscle Exercises

### KEGELS

1. What is the pelvic muscle? – Your pelvic muscle provides support to the bladder and rectum of men and women. In women, it also provides support to the vagina and the uterus. If this muscle weakens, it cannot support these organs and their position can change. This change in position can cause problems with normal function. Keeping the muscle strong can help prevent unwanted urine leakage.
2. Finding the pelvic muscle – Without tensing the muscles of your leg, buttocks or abdomen, imagine that you are trying to control the passing of gas or pinching off a stool. Or imagine you are in an elevator full of people and you feel the urge to pass gas. What do you do? You tighten or pull in the ring of muscle around your rectum – your pelvic muscle. You should feel a lifting sensation in the area around the vagina or a pulling in of your rectum.
3. Exercise Regimen – One exercise consists of both “tightening and relaxing” the muscle. It is equally important to control when your muscle tightens and relaxes. Be sure to relax completely between each muscle tightening.
4. Types of Exercises – There are two types of muscle contractions you will need to practice. Short (2 second) or Quick contractions and Slow (3 or 5 or 10 second) or Long contractions. To do the short or quick muscle contractions, contract or tighten your pelvic muscle quickly and hard, then immediately relax it. For the slow or long (sustained) contractions, contract or tighten your pelvic muscle and hold for a count of 3 or 5 or 10 seconds as prescribed. Relax the muscle completely for the same amount of time.
5. Where to practice – These exercises can be practiced anywhere and anytime. You can do the exercises in the following positions:
  - Lying Down – Lie flat on your back, or with your head on a pillow, knees bent, feet slightly apart. It is helpful to support your knees with a pillow.
  - Sitting – Sit upright in a firm seat and straight-backed chair, knees slightly apart, feet flat on the floor or legs stretched out in front and crossed at the ankles.
  - Standing – Stand by a chair, knees slightly bent with feet shoulder width apart and toes pointed slightly outward. You can also lean on the kitchen counter with your hips flexed.
6. Times to use the pelvic muscle – If you experience urine leakage in one specific position, like when you stand, follow these steps: Increase the number of exercises for that position only. Add additional Kegel exercises daily with a focus on doing all the exercises in that position only.
7. Common Mistakes – DO NOT tighten thighs, buttocks or stomach. If you feel your stomach move, you are also using these muscles. Concentrate on and tighten only the pelvic floor muscle. DO NOT hold your breath. Breathe normally and/or count out loud.
8. Can these exercises be harmful? No, Kegels cannot harm you in any way. You should find them easy and relaxing. If you get back or stomach pain after you exercise, you are probably trying too hard and using your stomach muscles. If you experience headaches, you may be tensing your chest muscles and/or holding your breath.
9. When will I see a change? After 4 to 6 weeks of daily exercise, you should begin to notice less urine leakage. Make the exercises part of your daily lifestyle. Make it a habit to tighten your pelvic floor muscle when you walk, as you stand up, and on the way to the bathroom.

## **Kegel Exercises, - Review And Tips To Get You Started**

To achieve the best results when performing these exercises, imagine yourself an athlete in training. You need to build the strength and the endurance of your muscles. **THIS REQUIRES REGULAR EXERCISE.**

It is recommended that you start doing Kegel exercises six to eight weeks prior to some surgeries. (daVinci prostatectomy and retropubic radical prostatectomy). If your surgery is scheduled sooner than that, start the exercises now.

Begin by locating the muscles to be exercised:

1. As you begin to urinate, try to stop or slow the urinary stream **WITHOUT** tensing the muscles of your legs, buttocks, or abdomen. This is very important. Using other muscles will defeat the purpose of the exercise.
2. When you are able to stop or slow the stream of urine, you know that you have located the correct muscles. Feel the sensation of the muscles pulling inward and upward.

**TIPS** – You may squeeze the rectal area in order to tighten the anus as if you were trying not to pass gas and you will be using the correct muscles. Remember **NOT** to tense the abdominal, buttock or thigh muscles.

**Now you are ready to exercise regularly:**

1. After you have located the correct muscles, set aside time each day for three to four exercise sessions (morning, mid-day, and evening).
2. Squeeze or tighten your muscles slowly. Try to hold them tight for up to ten seconds. Then relax the muscles slowly. This contraction, 10 second hold, and relaxation sequence counts as one “set”.
3. You should set a goal of doing 10-20 “sets” 3-4 times a day.

When your pelvic floor muscles are very weak, you should begin by contracting the muscles for only three to five seconds. Begin doing what you can and continue faithfully. In a few weeks, you should be able to increase the amount of time you are able to hold the contraction and the number of “sets” you are able to do. Your goal is to hold each contraction for ten seconds, relax for ten seconds, and to complete 10-20 “sets” in each of the three to four exercise sessions per day.

In the beginning, check yourself frequently by looking in the mirror. Place a hand on your abdomen and buttocks to ensure that you do not feel your belly, thigh, or buttock muscles move. If there is movement, continue to experiment until you have isolated just the muscles of the pelvic floor.

If you are unsure you are contracting the correct muscles, ask your urologist to help you identify the proper muscle contraction. Your bladder control should begin to improve within three to four weeks. If you keep a diary of urine leakage each day, you should begin to notice fewer instances of bladder leakage.

Exercise your pelvic muscles regularly for a lifetime to improve and maintain bladder control. Pelvic muscle exercises also improve orgasmic function. Whether you are doing pelvic muscle exercise to improve or maintain bladder control, improve orgasmic function, or both, they must be done faithfully. Make them part of your daily routine. Use daily activities such as eating meals, watching the news, stopping at traffic lights, or waiting in lines as cues to do a few pelvic muscle exercises.