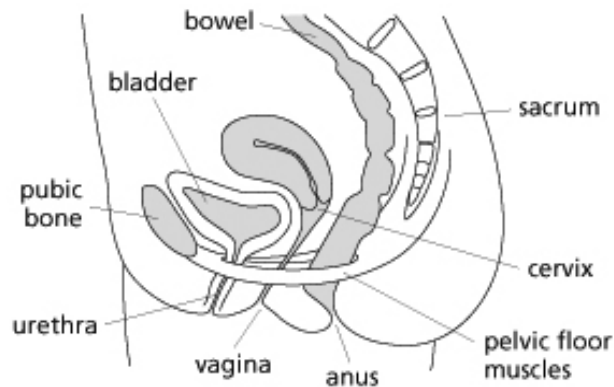


Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises

What are pelvic floor muscles?

The pelvic floor is made up of a group of muscles that attach from the pubic bone at the front of your pelvis to the tail bone at the back. There are three openings in the pelvic floor: urethra, vagina and anus. Having strong functioning pelvic floor muscles can prevent leakage from the bladder and bowel, support the pelvic organs and is important for sexual function.



Tips to remember

- It takes motivation and perseverance to stick to a daily programme. To make it easier to remember, link your exercises with something you do a few times a day e.g sitting on the toilet (when finished passing urine, never stop and start the flow of urine), in standing after washing your hands, sitting or standing on the bus etc
- Try to make sure you concentrate as you do them and finish the full set of exercises each time to be effective with your training. Doing them while driving is not very effective.
- You may find an app on your phone can be a helpful reminder. The Squeezy app from the NHS is recommended.
- This is a gentle exercise, it's ok if you cannot feel the muscles engaging very strongly initially
- Don't hold your breath doing the exercises!
- Don't give up! It can take a number of weeks or even months to see changes but you have the ability to strengthen and use your pelvic floor muscles functionally. If you are not progressing, speak to your physiotherapist.

Try to do your exercises x 3 per day

Long holds

Breathe into your tummy and allow your ribcage to expand outwards. As you gently breathe out imagine that you are trying to stop yourself passing wind and then urine. Starting at the back passage, squeeze and lift your pelvic floor muscles from the back to the front. You may

feel your lower tummy tighten gently as you do this. Keep your upper tummy, buttocks and thigh muscles relaxed and breathe normally.

Hold for _____ seconds. Rest _____ Seconds in between

Repeat this _____ times in a row.

As your pelvic floor muscles get stronger, gradually increase the length of time and number of repetitions until you can do a 10 second hold 10 times. Always stop exercising when the muscle tires.

Quick holds

Breathe normally as you quickly squeeze and lift your pelvic floor muscles strongly and hold for a second before letting go fully. It is important to feel the muscle release fully before you squeeze again. Picture a yo-yo dropping up and down.

Repeat this _____ times in a row.

Gradually increase the number of repetitions until you can do 10 in a row easily.

Perform your pelvic floor muscle training in the following positions

- Lying down. If you have a prolapse you may find it helpful to put a pillow under your bottom also.
- Sitting (leaning forward, back straight, feet apart and forearms on thighs)
- Standing
- Functional Positions _____

The Knack

Your pelvic floor muscles should naturally engage when there is an increased pressure in your abdomen such as when you cough, sneeze or lift something, but for some women it doesn't. So squeeze and hold your pelvic floor muscles **strongly** BEFORE coughing, sneezing, laughing or lifting. Don't bend over when you cough or sneeze, stay up tall to allow your muscles to work well.

Breathe out and engage your muscles **gently** when you go to stand up out of a chair or when you are getting out of bed if you leak with these activities.

Don't grip your muscles when walking around, unless you are trying to get the bladder to calm down when you feel urgency.

You can see some videos about pelvic floor muscle training on the physiotherapy page on the Rotunda website www.rotunda.ie/physio