

Pelvic floor muscle exercises

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Where are my pelvic floor muscles?

The first thing to do is to find out which muscles you need to train:

1. Sit or lie down with the muscles of your thighs, buttocks and stomach relaxed
2. Squeeze the ring of muscle around the back passage as if you are trying to stop passing wind. Now relax this muscle. Squeeze and let go a couple of times until you are sure you have found the right muscles. Try not to squeeze your buttocks
3. When sitting on the toilet to empty your bladder, try to stop the stream of urine, then start it again. Do this to learn which muscles are the right ones to use – **but do this no more than once a week**. Your bladder may not empty the way it should if you stop and start your stream more often than that

If you don't feel a distinct "squeeze and lift" of your pelvic floor muscles, or if you can't slow your stream of urine as talked about in Point 3, discuss with your midwife, doctor, physiotherapist or continence nurse. They will help you to get your pelvic floor muscles working right.

Women with very weak pelvic floor muscles can benefit from pelvic floor muscle exercises.

How do I do pelvic floor muscle exercises?

Now that you can feel the muscles working, you can:

- Squeeze and draw in the muscles around your back passage and your vagina at the same time:
 - Lift them UP inside
 - You should have a sense of "lift" each time you squeeze your pelvic floor muscles
 - Try to hold them strong and tight as you count to 8
 - Now, let them go and relax
 - You should have a distinct feeling of "letting go"
- Repeat "squeeze and lift" and let go. It is best to rest for about 8 seconds in between each lift up of the muscles. **If you can't hold for 8, just hold for as long as you can**
- Repeat this "squeeze and lift" as many times as you can, up to a limit of 8 to 12 squeezes
- Try to do three sets of 8 to 12 squeezes each, with a rest in between
- Do this whole training plan (three sets of 8 to 12 squeezes) each day while lying down, sitting or standing

While doing pelvic floor muscle training: keep breathing; only squeeze and lift; do NOT tighten your buttocks; and keep your thighs relaxed.

Other things you can do to help your pelvic floor muscles:

- Use "the knack" – that is, always try to "brace" your pelvic floor muscles (by squeezing up and holding) each time before you cough, sneeze or lift anything
- Share the lifting of heavy loads
- Eat fruit and vegetables and drink 6 to 8 glasses of water daily
- Don't strain when using your bowels
- Ask your doctor about [treatment for] hay fever, asthma and bronchitis to ease sneezing and coughing
- Keep your weight within the right range for your height and age



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