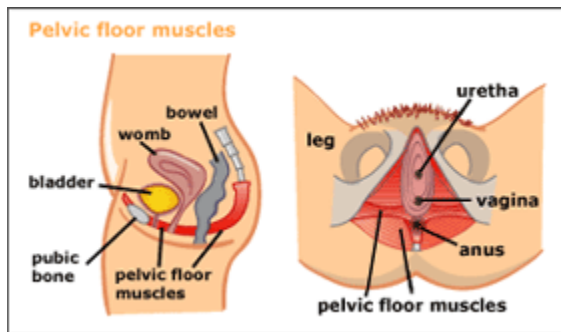




Pelvic Floor Exercise Stimulators To Help Treat Incontinence (Stress, Urge, Mixed and Faecal)

What is the Pelvic Floor?

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles and ligaments which support the bladder, uterus (womb) and bowel. Each of these organs has openings which pass through the pelvic floor; the urethra from the bladder, the vagina from the uterus and the anus from the bowel. The pelvic floor muscles attach to your pubic bone at the front and the tail bone at the back and run along the base of your pelvis.



What do the pelvic floor muscles do?

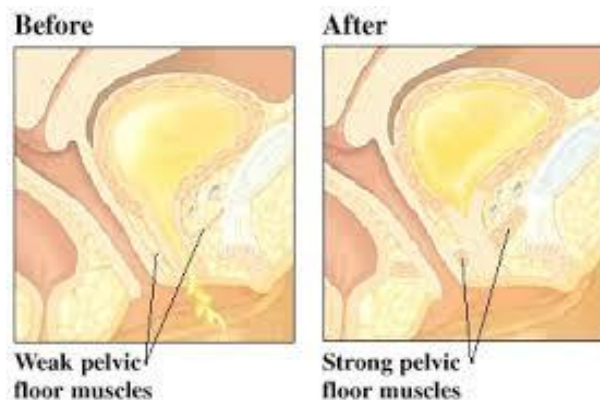
When the pelvic floor is strong, it supports the pelvic organs to prevent problems such as:

- incontinence (the involuntary loss of urine or faeces)
- prolapse (lack of support) of the bladder, uterus and bowel

The pelvic floor muscles help you to control bladder and bowel function, such as allowing you to 'hold on' until an appropriate time and place. Strong pelvic floor muscles may also lead to greater sexual satisfaction.

How do I strengthen my pelvic floor muscles?

It is recommended that all women exercise their pelvic floor muscles everyday throughout life, to prevent weakness and improve strength. Exercising weak muscles regularly, over a period of time can strengthen them and make them work effectively again. By exercising and strengthening the pelvic floor muscles you should be better able to control the urethra and anus openings allowing you to "hold on".



What are the options to treat Stress, Urge (Over Active Bladder) and Mixed incontinence?

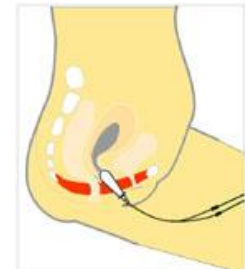
There are many options to treat Stress, Urge and Mixed incontinence. One of the least complicated options is Pelvic Floor Exercises (Kegels). Pelvic Floor Exercise Stimulators (PFES) and Physiotherapy are some other tools to help keep your muscles toned.

What is a Pelvic Floor Exercise Stimulator (PFES)?

A PFES is a device that can help you exercise your pelvic floor muscles. A PFES, uses a vaginal probe (or pads that adhere to the skin in rare cases) to send a gentle stimulation to your pelvic floor muscle. A PFES uses clinically proven programmes to target the different types of incontinence. In the case of urge or over active bladder (OAB) incontinence the stimulation programme not only stimulates the pelvic floor muscle to help keep the urethra closed but also calms the unwanted contractions of the muscle surrounding the bladder which causes the frequency and uncontrollable urge to “go”.

Some women (and some men) are unable to voluntarily exercise the muscle themselves and require assistance. The pelvic floor muscle is like any other muscle in the body, it requires exercise to keep it strong and healthy. The muscle can become weak for a number of reasons; pregnancy, giving birth, age and or menopause. It is this weakening that is the primary cause of stress urinary incontinence.

Although pelvic floor exercises produce the best results, once your muscle has lost its tone it can be very difficult to do voluntary exercise properly. This is when a PFES device can play a vital role in locating and exercising the muscle for you. A PFES device can work your muscles for you and helps to develop your own muscle control. A PFES sends gentle stimulation through a tampon shaped vaginal probe to the pelvic floor muscle using programmes to stimulate muscles and soothe an overactive bladder. This stimulation over a period of just a few weeks can help to improve stress, urge or mixed incontinence. Correctly performed pelvic floor exercises are vital in order to prevent stress urinary incontinence and can provide women with a greater level of satisfaction during sex. 30% of women who experience incontinence are unable to carry out their pelvic floor exercises naturally and correctly and require additional assistance, such as that provided by a PFES. It is also possible to stimulate the anal muscles to help with some forms of faecal incontinence in both males and females using an anal probe.



The SOGC (Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists) clinical practice guidelines (2006) list PFES as adjunct therapy to be used with Kegel exercises and they recommend PFES for the treatment of Overactive Bladder (OAB). Once your symptoms have resolved, you must continue to exercise the pelvic floor. Regular Kegel exercises along with the tone program on a PFES device can be continued to help you maintain your ability to control your pelvic floor muscles.

For more information ask your physiotherapist or health care provider about PFES for home use and clinic use.