

CONTINENCE *FACTS*

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PELVIC MUSCLE EXERCISES • *KEGEL EXERCISES* • FOR URINARY INCONTINENCE

Introduction

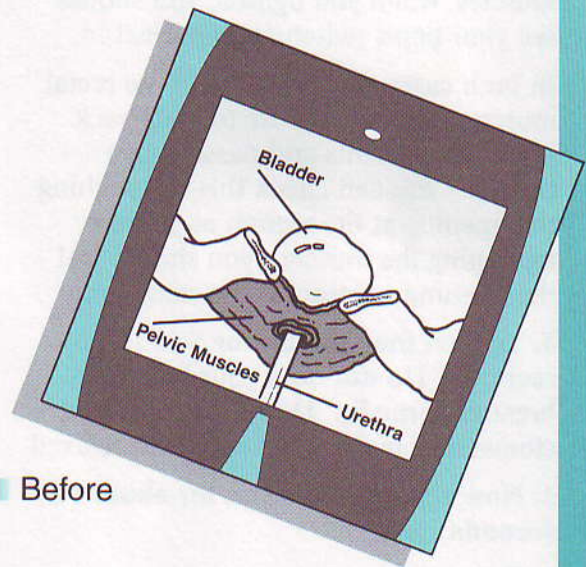
Pelvic muscle exercises are a therapy used for treating incontinence in both women and men of all ages. They do not involve surgery or medication, and pose little risk for side effects. Similar to any other exercises, they are a series of repeated contractions of one set of muscles - the pelvic muscles. The exercises are commonly called Kegel exercises, named after Dr. Kegel, who developed them over 40 years ago. Your healthcare professional may have recommended Kegel exercises for you. The following information may be helpful as you begin to do the exercises.

How Pelvic Muscle Exercises may Help

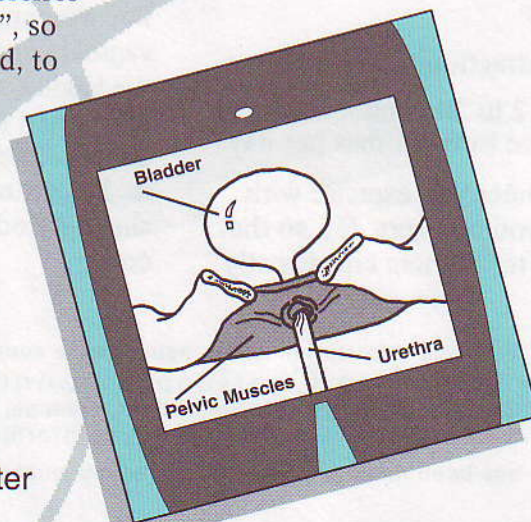
The pelvic muscles support the bladder like a hammock. We can tighten, and relax these muscles. When tightened or contracted, the urethra, the tube which passes urine from the bladder to outside the body, is squeezed so that urine is held in. If the muscles are strong, urine will not leak. But if the muscles are weak, they cannot close off the urethra, and urine may leak. Pelvic muscle exercises help to strengthen the "hammock", so that the urethra can be kept closed, to keep urine in.

Consult a Healthcare Professional

Incontinence can almost always be cured, treated or managed successfully. Pelvic muscle exercises are only one method for retraining the muscles. Consult a healthcare professional who is interested and experienced in the area of incontinence. If you have any questions or concerns about these exercises ask your healthcare professional for help.



Before



After

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How to do Pelvic Muscle Exercises

Teach yourself to relax and focus on the pelvic muscle exercises. This will become easier with practice.

1. Stand, sit or lie down with your knees slightly apart (about 25 cm or 10 in apart). **Relax.**

2. Find your pelvic muscle. Imagine that you are trying to hold back urine, or a bowel movement. Squeeze the muscles you would use to do that.

■ Women

To check that you are tightening the correct muscles, you can insert your finger into the vagina and tighten the muscle. You should feel a tightening around the finger.

■ Men

To check that you are tightening the correct muscles, when you tighten, you should see your penis twitch and contract in.

In both cases, you should feel the rectal muscle (the one you use to hold back bowel movements and passing gas) tighten. You can check this by touching the opening at the rectum as you are tightening the muscle - you should feel the opening contract at the same time.

3. Tighten the muscles for 5 to 10 seconds. Do **not** hold your breath - breathe normally. Do **not** tighten your stomach or buttocks - keep them relaxed.

4. Now relax the muscles for about 10 seconds.

5. Repeat.

Your Schedule

- Repeat the contractions 12 to 20 times.
- Do the set of 12 to 20 contractions and relaxations three to five times per day.
- Schedule the times you exercise with activities that you do every day, so that you remember to do them consistently.



Tips

- Do them properly - check often to be sure that you are using the correct muscles.
- Do them regularly - at least three times per day.
- Do them when you need them most - learn to do them just before sneezing, coughing, or straining.
- Keep on doing them - Do not become discouraged. You should start to see results after a few weeks. However, like any muscle of the body, the pelvic muscles will only stay strong as long as you exercise them. Once you have reached your goal, continue your exercises at least every other day.

Some Other Techniques which may be Presented to You

If you find it difficult to identify the correct muscles to exercise, your healthcare professional can help. Your healthcare professional may recommend the use of biofeedback equipment to help you identify and exercise your pelvic muscles. Biofeedback allows you to see the effects of your muscle contractions on a monitor, so that you can more easily know if you are contracting the right muscles.

For women, there are devices called vaginal cones, which can be inserted into the vagina, again to help identify and strengthen the pelvic muscles. Once a cone is inserted, you would try to hold it in, by contracting the pelvic muscle for a short period of time, before removing the cone.



For more information about incontinence contact

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