

General Instructions for Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises

The pelvic floor muscles support the bladder and the bowel (**Fig. 1a and 1b**). They can weaken with age, illness, or hormonal changes. Weak pelvic floor muscles can lead to urine leakage. Pregnancy and childbirth can weaken the pelvic floor muscles in women. Weak pelvic floor muscles can lead to urine leakage. Prostate surgery, and in particular radical prostatectomy, can weaken the pelvic floor muscles in men.

A structured programme of exercises to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles can improve urinary incontinence. It consists of a series of exercises to train the muscles, which is designed specifically for your needs.

This is a general pelvic floor muscle exercise programme. Discuss with your doctor the schedule for your individual programme.

Always practice the exercises with an empty bladder.

Always consult your health care professional before trying these exercises.

The first exercise is aimed at the front pelvic floor.

- Find a position that is comfortable for you, this could be laying down, sitting, or standing.
- Squeeze and pull up your pelvic floor muscles as though you are trying to stop the flow of urine, and relax immediately. Repeat this fast exercise up to 10 times.
- Next, do the same exercise again but this time try to hold on for up to 5 seconds before relaxing. Repeat this slower exercise up to 10 times. It may take a few weeks for you to manage to hold for 5 seconds before relaxing. Your muscles have to build up strength.

The next exercise is aimed at your rear pelvic floor.

- Squeeze and pull up the muscles as though you are trying to stop the flow from your rectum, and relax. Repeat this exercise up to 10 times.
- Perform the same exercise again but this time try to hold the squeeze and pull sensation for up to 5 seconds before relaxing. Repeat up to 10 times.

These exercises work best if they are repeated every day. It takes at least 3 months for the muscles to gain strength and tone. Remember that you are training muscles and over-exercising can harm them. Do not try to do more than 10 repetitions of each exercise in one attempt and do not do more than 3 cycles of exercises in a day. Your specialist nurse or urologist will give you a personalised schedule.

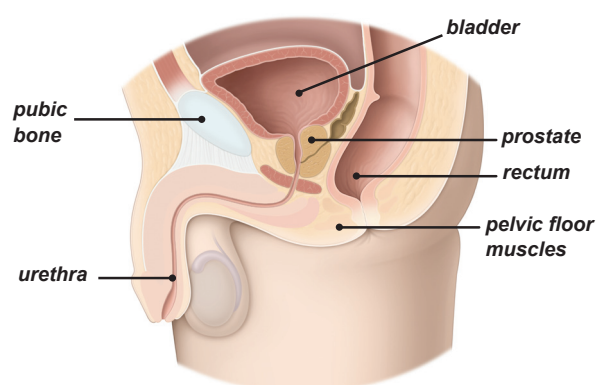


Fig. 1a: Pelvic floor muscles in men.

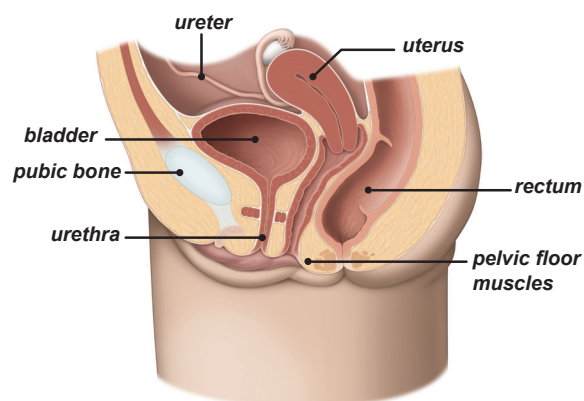


Fig. 1b: Pelvic floor muscles in women.