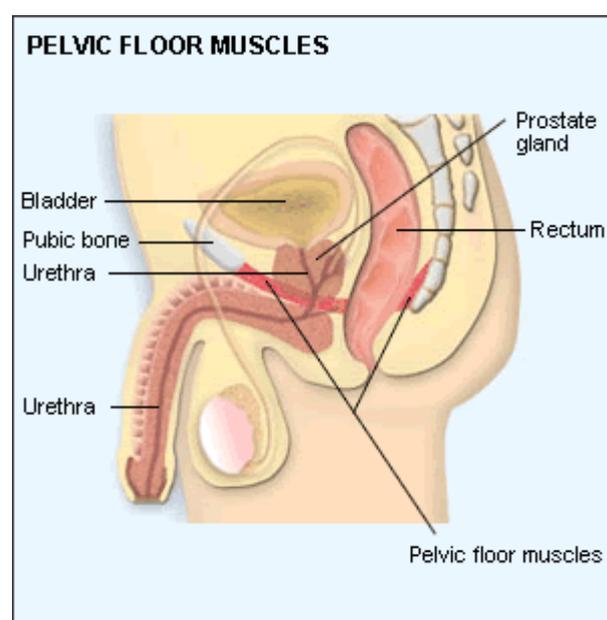


# Male pelvic floor muscle exercises

The pelvic floor muscles are located between your legs and run from your pubic bone at the front to the base of your spine at the back. They fill the gap between the bones you sit on and hold your pelvic organs in the correct place. The pelvic floor muscles if working normally should be reacting automatically to help control your bladder and bowel. The pelvic floor muscles are also important for sexual function - they may help to achieve or maintain an erection and prevent premature ejaculation.



## Benefits of Pelvic Floor Exercises

- Better bladder control
- Better bowel control
- Support for pelvic organs
- Improved muscle condition and strength
- Decrease erectile dysfunction

## Why do pelvic floor muscles become weak or dysfunctional?

- Prostate surgery, for example a prostatectomy or TURP (transurethral resection of prostate), may affect the pelvic floor and its delicate nerve supply. Pelvic radiation therapy may have similar effects.

- Poor physical fitness due to a lack of regular exercise or being overweight may lead to poor muscle tone and excess strain on the pelvic floor muscles.
- Chronic constipation, prolonged heavy lifting or a chronic cough may also stretch the pelvic floor muscles, their nerve supply and supporting tissues.
- Certain conditions, for example, multiple sclerosis (MS), stroke and diabetes may affect the nerve supply to the muscles.
- Injury to the perineum (the area from the base of the penis to the back passage) by a direct blow or prolonged pressure e.g., cycling for long periods.

## How to do Pelvic floor exercises

The following exercises will help you to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. (Please read the entire programme before beginning the exercises)

It is important that you get the right muscles working in the right way.

- Sit comfortably with your thighs, buttocks and tummy relaxed.
- Start by pulling forwards and up as if trying to stop the flow of urine. You should feel an upward movement of the scrotum (testicles) - “nuts to guts”
- If you need help with bowel control add in tightening around your back passage (as if stopping yourself passing wind).
- You may feel some of your tummy muscles working gently but the muscles in your buttocks and thighs should be relaxed
- Try not to hold your breath while you are doing the exercises, breathe in and out as normally as you can.

## Long Squeezes:

1. Hold tight for as many seconds as you can, as soon as you feel the muscles starting to fade – LET GO.

How long can you hold? .....(no more than 10 seconds)

2. Rest and recover for 5-10 seconds

3. How many times can you repeat this hold, when the last is as good as the first?

.....(no more than 10 at a time)

## Short Squeezes:

It is also important that you train your muscles to react quickly to sudden changes in pressure, for example when you cough and sneeze. Therefore, it is recommended that you do this exercise.

- Start by pulling forwards and up as if trying to stop the flow of urine. You should feel an upward movement of the scrotum (testicles) - “nuts to guts”
- If you need help with bowel control add in tightening around your back passage (as if stopping yourself passing wind).
- Continue pulling up towards your tummy button (navel) as if zipping up a pair of trousers (Zip 2). You will be aware of a gentle tightness in your lower tummy

1. NOW LET GO straight away (do not hold)

2. Repeat

How many times can you repeat this? ..... (no more than 10)

## To check that your pelvic floor muscles are working correctly:

- Place your fingers on your perineum. You should feel the perineum lift upwards as you contract your muscles.
- Stand in front of a mirror when you do a pelvic floor muscle contraction you should see the base of your penis and your testicles draw inwards

## Functional bracing (the knack)

It does not matter how strong your muscles are, they will only work if you use them at the right times. Therefore, you need to tighten your pelvic floor muscles and your deep tummy muscles before you

- cough, sneeze or blow your nose
- lift or carry
- get up from sitting
- go from stand to sit
- do any other activity where you are likely to need support or leak e.g. bending / exercising

After the activity ensure that your pelvic floor has totally relaxed

## Top tips

- Letting the muscles relax is just as important as tightening
- Avoid tightening your buttocks or thigh muscles
- Relaxation – it is just as important to have pelvic floor muscles that can relax as it is for them to contract. Increased stress can cause changes to your posture and breathing and this can put more tension on all your muscles including your pelvic floor. If this is a problem, it is best to consult your Pelvic Health Physiotherapist.
- Remembering exercises
- Build it into your day
- Put a reminder on your phone such as an app
- Try one of the pelvic floor exercise apps
- Bring the exercise into your regular gym regime

## Some common questions:

### **Does my weight have anything to do with my problems?**

Maintaining a healthy weight can help considerably by reducing the strain placed on the pelvic floor muscles

### **Why are my symptoms worse when I am constipated?**

Straining when constipated puts extra pressure on the pelvic floor muscles. If you do need to support your pelvic floor while opening your bowels you can apply manual pressure to the area in front of your anus (back passage). Eating sufficient dietary fibre and drinking plenty of fluids will help avoid constipation.

### **I leak when picking up a heavy weight. Can I do anything to stop this?**

Remember to tighten your pelvic floor muscles before you lift and hold it tight until you have lowered the weight, as lifting puts a strain on the pelvic floor muscles.

### **Are there any exercises I should be careful with?**

If you ride a bicycle for long periods, make sure you raise yourself off the seat at regular intervals to take the pressure off your perineum. Prolonged pressure on the perineum can damage the delicate nerves and blood vessels in the area.

Consider wearing padded shorts

Special saddles have been designed to prevent this problem.