

Kegel or Pelvic Floor Exercises for Women

Kegel or pelvic floor muscles exercises help strengthen weak muscles around the bladder. When these muscles are weak, you can leak urine.

What are pelvic floor muscles?

The pelvic floor is made up of muscles that give support to the uterus, bladder and rectum. These muscles also support, lift and control muscles that close the urethra (tube that urine passes through).

How do I do Kegel exercises?

To do a Kegel exercise, you relax and tighten the muscles you use to control the flow of urine. Kegel exercises are easy to do and can be done anytime.

How do I find the right muscles?

To find the right muscles, try the following:

- The next time you urinate, try to start and stop your urine stream. This exercise will help you find the right muscles. Repeat this exercise once a week to check whether or not you are using the correct muscles.
- Do not tighten your buttocks or thigh muscles when doing these exercises. Relax your stomach muscles as much as possible.
- To check that you are doing the exercise right, insert one finger into the vagina and squeeze the muscle. If you are doing the exercise the right way, you should feel the muscle tighten around your finger.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

What are the steps to do these exercises?

- Start by squeezing the muscles for a count of four (4) then relax for a count of four (4). At first, you may only be able to squeeze your muscles for 1 to 2 seconds but as your muscles get stronger, you will be able to hold the count of four (4).
- When squeezing to a count of four (4) becomes easy, you can increase the squeezing to a count of eight (8). Do this for five (5) minutes two (2) times a day.
- Remember to relax in between each muscle squeeze; let the muscles go loose; do not push down.

Where can I do these exercises?

When you first start doing the exercises, find a place where you can do them without being interrupted. After you have done them for a while, you can practice the exercises anytime and anywhere. It often takes 6 to 12 weeks to see results if you do these exercises regularly.

Tips to remember:

Always squeeze your pelvic floor muscles when you:

- Sit up from lying down
- Stand from a sitting position
- Lift something heavy

You can practice squeezing the muscles when you are watching TV, standing in line or driving a car.

Are there any precautions?

- Do not exercise too much. Start slow and increase the amount of exercise. Follow the directions that your health care team has given you.
- Breathe during the exercises. Holding your breath may put extra pressure on your pelvic muscles.