



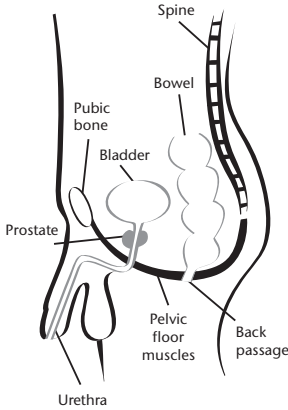
Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises for men

Information for men
from physiotherapy services



This leaflet helps explain how to exercise and strengthen your Pelvic Floor Muscles (PFMs).

WHAT IS THE PELVIC FLOOR?



The floor of the pelvis is made up of layers of muscle. These layers stretch like a hammock from the pubic bone at the front to the base of the spine at the back.

A man's pelvic floor supports the bladder and bowel. The urethra (urine tube) and the anus (back passage) pass through the pelvic floor muscles. The pelvic floor muscles play an important role in bladder and bowel control.

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Your pelvic floor muscles are constantly working to help you control your bladder and bowel and assist with good sexual function.

A weak pelvic floor can mean you lose some of your bladder control. This can lead to symptoms such as leaking urine when you cough or sneeze. Strong pelvic floor muscles will prevent this from happening.

SIGNS THE PFMS MAY BE WEAKENED

- ❖ **Stress incontinence:** when urine leaks out when you cough, sneeze, laugh, lift something, exercise, change position eg lying to sitting or sitting to standing.
- ❖ **Urge incontinence:** when you urgently need to pass urine suddenly, when you can't hold on and you may not be able to reach the toilet in time.
- ❖ **Urinary frequency:** when you need to pass urine frequently during the day and night.
- ❖ **Overflow incontinence:** when the bladder doesn't empty completely, urine builds up and this can lead to it overflowing causing frequent dribbling. This can also cause frequency.
- ❖ **Nocturia:** when you have to get up frequently during the night to pass urine. There can be leakage at night without warning.

WHY MIGHT THESE MUSCLES BECOME WEAK?

- ❖ Surgery to your prostate eg prostatectomy can cause PFM weakness
- ❖ Constipation. "Pushing down" and straining to empty your bowel can put pressure on the PFMs causing PFM weakness over time.
- ❖ Being overweight can put extra pressure on your PFMs.
- ❖ A chronic cough can put pressure on the Pelvic Floor and can cause damage to the PFMs

HOW TO EXERCISE THE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

- ❖ You can do the exercises lying on your back with your knees bent or sitting in the chair with your knees slightly apart.
- ❖ Try to squeeze your pelvic floor muscles by imagining you are trying to stop yourself passing urine and wind.
- ❖ Hold the squeeze for as many seconds as you can. Slowly build up to 10 seconds. This is a slow squeeze.
- ❖ Now squeeze again but let go straight way. This is a fast squeeze.
- ❖ Build this up over the weeks aiming eventually to do 10 slow squeezes and 10 fast squeezes.
- ❖ You should do this 5 times a day.
- ❖ Remember when doing the exercises do not hold your breath, squeeze your buttocks or squeeze your legs together.

HOW WILL I KNOW I'M DOING THE EXERCISES CORRECTLY?

1. Place your fingertips against the skin just behind your scrotum. When you squeeze you should feel the muscles tighten and lift away from your fingers.
Your scrotum should lift slightly and the base of your penis should move towards your abdomen.
2. You can also check this by standing in front of the mirror without clothes on and tighten the PFMs. You should see the base of the penis pull up towards your abdomen and your scrotum lift up. You may see your lower abdomen pull in slightly.

It is very important you squeeze correctly. If you squeeze incorrectly you may cause more damage.

HINTS TO HELP

- ❖ The muscles may get tired at first but will get stronger the more you practise your exercises.
- ❖ Don't be tempted to speed up the process by doing exercises more often than advised. Over-exercising can lead to the PFM's getting fatigued and can slow the strengthening process.
- ❖ Be patient and don't give up. It may be a couple of months before you see an improvement. Most men will find that they have fewer leaks after exercising the PFM's for 3 months and it may take up to 6-12 months before there is full improvement.
- ❖ To help you remember to do the PFM exercises do them at the same time that you do other activities. For example after you have finished passing urine, after having breakfast, lunch or dinner, or while watching the news.
- ❖ Avoid lifting heavy items. When lifting always remember to tighten the PFM's beforehand.

FURTHER ADVICE

- ✓ Drink 2 litres of fluid a day. You will need to drink more in hot weather or if you are exercising.
- ✗ Avoid drinks with caffeine in, for example tea, coffee, cola. Drink decaffeinated versions, or something else such as water.
- ✗ Don't go to the toilet just in case. Only go when your bladder is full.
- ✓ Avoid constipation. Eat at least 5 portions of fruit/vegetables a day. If you still need to strain to empty your bowels ask for further advice.
- ✓ Squeeze and hold your pelvic floor muscles before coughing, sneezing, lifting, laughing, etc.
- ✓ Aim to be the correct weight for your height. Ask if you need further advice in how to reduce your weight.

YOUR EXERCISE PLAN

Slow contractions	Fast contractions	Number of times per day
Hold for: Rest for: Repeat times	Repeat times	

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