

Pelvic Floor Exercise

What is the pelvic floor?

The pelvic floor is made up of a group of muscles stretching from side to side across the floor of the pelvis. It is attached to your pubic bone in front, and to the the tail end of your spine behind. The openings from your bladder, your bowels and your womb all pass through your pelvic floor.

What weakens the pelvic floor muscles?

Pelvic floor muscles weaken for similar reasons to other muscles in our bodies: natural ageing and inactivity. But pelvic floor muscles are also often weakened through hormonal changes in women's bodies, and through pregnancy and childbirth. Factors such as being overweight, ongoing constipation and a chronic cough can put extra pressure on the pelvic floor and pelvic surgery can also have damaging effects.

Can it help with pelvic pain?

Research has also shown that pelvic floor exercise can provide relief from chronic pelvic pain syndrome.

Kegel exercises

Exercise 1

Tighten the muscles around your back passage, vagina and front passage and lift up inside as if trying to stop passing wind and urine at the same time. It is very easy to bring other, irrelevant muscles into play, so try to isolate your pelvic floor as much as possible by

- . **not** pulling in your tummy,
- . **not** squeezing your legs together,
- . **not** tightening your buttocks and
- . **not** holding your breath.

The effort should be coming from the pelvic floor.

For how many seconds can you hold the pelvic floor tight? Try holding it as long and as hard as you can. Build up to a maximum of 10 seconds. Rest for 4 seconds and then repeat the contraction as many times as you can up to a maximum of 10 contractions.

Try to do these exercises in a slow and controlled way with a rest of 4 seconds between each muscle contraction. Practise your maximum number of held contractions (up to 10) about six times each day.

Exercise 2

Practise some quick contractions, drawing in the pelvic floor and holding for just one second before releasing the muscles. Do these steadily, aiming for a strong muscle tightening with each contraction up to a maximum of 10 times.

Try to do one set of slow contractions (exercise 1) followed by one set of quick contractions (exercise 2) six times each day.

If you do pelvic floor exercises regularly, you will see optimum results within 3 to 6 months, but you should continue them for life to fully protect your pelvic floor.