

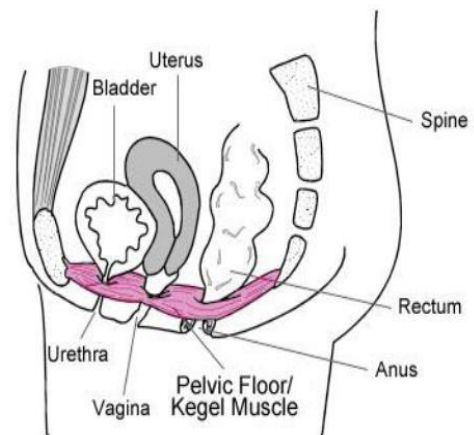
Pelvic floor muscle exercises

Patient Information

The pelvic floor muscles

The pelvic floor muscles form a tight sling at the base of the pelvis; running from the pubic bone to the tailbone (or coccyx) and surround the passages to your bladder, vagina and rectum. They play a vital role in childbirth, sexual function and bladder and bowel control. These muscles work all day even when we are asleep.

Up to a third of women will experience a problem with their pelvic floor muscles. This may present as leaking during activity, coughing or sneezing (stress urinary incontinence) or a prolapse (feeling of something coming down in the vagina). Having effective pelvic floor muscles will lead to improved bladder, bowel and sexual function. They often respond well to simple exercises.



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How do I find my pelvic floor?

It's really helpful to use breathing with your pelvic floor muscle exercises. Your diaphragm, that sits around your ribcage, attaches through your back and tummy muscles to the pelvic floor at the bottom. When you breathe in, your diaphragm and pelvic floor muscles lengthen and as you breathe out they tighten and contract.

Get into a comfortable lying or sitting position. Take a breath in and feel your ribs opening up, tummy softening and pelvic floor muscles lengthening. As you breathe out try to squeeze and lift your pelvic floor muscles around your back passage (as if you are trying to stop yourself breaking wind) and your front passage (as if you are trying to stop the flow of urine). Your buttocks and legs should be relaxed. Some gentle drawing in of the lower tummy muscles at the same time is normal.

Exercise Method

You should do a combination of slow and fast hold exercises aiming to be able to do 10 slow squeezes and 10-15 fast squeezes, 3 times a day. It can take time to build these up.

Slow squeeze

- Take a breath in (as described above)
- Breathe out and squeeze and lift your pelvic floor gently.
- Maintain this hold for up to 10 seconds while breathing normally.
- Repeat up to 10 times

Remember, it can take time to build up to 10 seconds.

Fast squeeze

- Quickly tighten your pelvic floor muscles then immediately relax.
- Make sure you completely relax between each contraction.
- Repeat 10-15 times

Remember it may take time to build up to these repetitions

Try not to

- Hold your breath
- Squeeze your buttocks
- Draw your knees together

Positions for Exercise

- Lying
- Sitting
- Standing – This is best if you are strong enough, but you may need to build up to it as it is more difficult to do.

Other ways to help

- You can learn to pull up and brace your pelvic floor just before coughing, sneezing or lifting to prevent leaking.
- Take time to fully empty your bladder, you may need to slowly rock or lean forward whilst sitting on the toilet.
- Reduce your body weight to reduce the strain on the muscles. This will help to enable better control of the sphincters that support the bladder.
- Don't reduce your water intake as this will make your urine more concentrated and may irritate your bladder. Reducing caffeine and alcohol intake can also help alleviate bladder irritation.
- Avoid constipation as straining stretches the muscles and adds to the weakness of the bladder and bowel.
- Try not to empty your bladder until you are sure that you need to go.
- If you are a smoker try to give up – ask your doctor for details of support available to you.

Physiotherapy advice notes

Physiotherapist Name: _____

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Regarding children, WHC is responsible for providing services in accordance with Section 11 of the Children's Act (1989) and works under the principles of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018).

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any questions, or concerns, suggestions or compliments about our service, please speak to a member of staff.

This information sheet is available in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 0300 1237797 and PALS.wiltshirehealthandcare@nhs.net

Patient and Public Involvement

We value your opinions which will help us to further develop our services.

If you wish to provide feedback or get involved in our patient participation groups, please email the Patient and Public Involvement Officer at ask.wiltshirehealthandcare@nhs.net or telephone 01249 454386.