

# Vaginal Cones

## Information for Patients

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### What is a vaginal cone?

A vaginal cone is a cone-shaped device that is inserted into your vagina like a tampon to help strengthen your pelvic floor. The cones are available in different sizes and weights to allow you to find what is most suitable for you. There are a variety of different vaginal cones that can be purchased online. The more expensive cones do not necessarily mean they have a better effect.

Vaginal cones can help you to feel your pelvic floor muscles working. Some women can find it difficult to know if they are exercising their muscles correctly. When you insert the cone, the pelvic floor muscles will automatically contract to hold the cone in, and when they tire the cone will fall out.

Just like using weights to strengthen the muscles in your arms and legs, you can use vaginal cones to help strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. The cones can help improve your motivation to do your exercises and you can use them while doing your day-to-day activities (such as housework and walking).

### Why have I been advised to purchase cones?

Vaginal cones are most commonly advised to be used when you are suffering from stress incontinence or if you have been advised to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles, for instance if you have been diagnosed with a mild prolapse.

There is evidence that using vaginal cones can be as effective as performing pelvic floor muscle exercises.

### How to use a vaginal cone?

#### Step 1 – inserting the cone

- Start with the largest cone you have with the lowest weight (this may be no weight)
- You should insert the cone while you are standing with one leg raised on a chair or toilet seat
- Hold the cone at its base and gently insert into your vagina, only the cord or tail of the cone remains outside your body. The cone should be lower within the vagina than a tampon
- Touch the bottom of the cone where the cord is with your finger
- Tighten your pelvic floor muscles and feel the cone move away from your finger
- Relax the pelvic floor muscles and feel the cone come back down. Repeat this a few times until you feel the correct muscle working
- If the cone moves down towards your finger, you are using the wrong muscles. You may be using your stomach muscles or holding your breath

- If you are unable to keep the empty, large cone in place while standing, you should instead try the above steps but lying on your back with your knees bent
- Once you are confident in the positioning of your cone, you can move to step 2.

### **Step 2 – using the cone**

- Try to keep the cone in position as you stand for longer periods of time
- Once this becomes easier, you can try to keep the cone in position as you move around
- Aim to keep the cone in position for up to 20 minutes once per day – please be aware you will be unable to hold a pelvic floor contraction for the full 20 minutes
- If you can move around without the cone slipping you are ready to progress to step 3.

### **Step 3 –how to make your cone exercises more challenging**

- You can slowly increase the weight of the cone
- You can also decrease the size of the cone
- If you have specific activities that are causing issues (such as leaking urine when you are walking) you can use your cone during these activities
- Try to keep the cone in while doing more vigorous activities such as climbing the stairs, making the bed, coughing, or jumping
- The cone can be in place for a maximum of 20 minutes a day
- You should continue your cone exercises for at least 12 weeks.

### **Additional advice**

- Your pelvic floor muscles get more tired as the day goes on. You may be able to use heavier cones in the morning than in the evening
- Pelvic floor muscles may seem to be weaker pre-menstrually
- Your vaginal secretions may change from day to day. This may affect your ability to hold the cone in place, so you may have some days that are more difficult than others.

### **How to clean your vaginal cone**

- Make sure every part of your cone is washed in soapy water, rinsed, and dried thoroughly after each use
- You should keep your cones in a clean container.

## **When should I not use my vaginal cone?**

- If you have an infection in the area, STI
- During your period
- If you have a severe vaginal prolapse
- If you are pregnant
- In the first 12 weeks following vaginal surgery
- Not to use until at least 6-8 weeks after giving birth.

## **Useful App**

The **NHS Squeezy app** can provide support with your pelvic floor muscle exercise programme:

<https://www.squeezyapp.com/>



**This leaflet should only be used by specific individuals following a physiotherapy assessment. If you have any concerns, please contact your physiotherapist.**