

Pelvic floor muscle exercises and diary

Information for patients



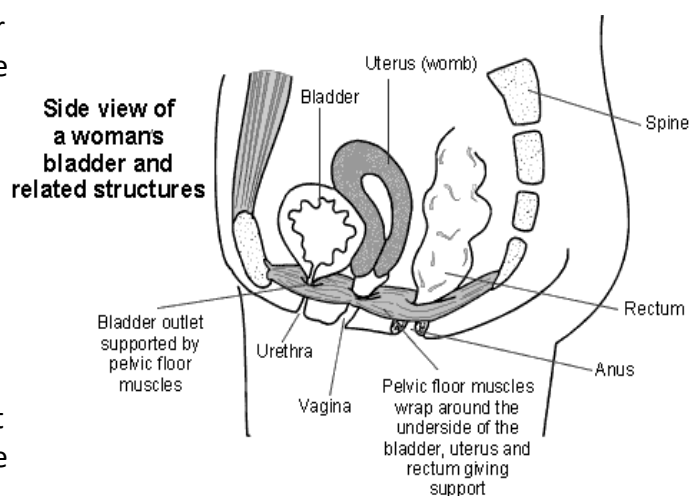
What are the pelvic floor muscles?

Your pelvic floor muscles support the contents of your pelvis. They are attached like a hammock between the pelvic bones and lie underneath your bladder, womb and bowels.

How do my pelvic floor muscles work?

The pelvic floor muscles have 2 types of muscle fibres and they both work slightly differently.

- **Slow muscle fibres** have constant tone in them; even while you are asleep. They support your pelvic organs, and help to keep your urine inside your bladder until you find a suitable place to pass it.
- **Fast muscle fibres** contract strongly and quickly to prevent urine leaking from your bladder when there is a sudden, extra pressure placed on the bladder (e.g. when you cough, sneeze, laugh, lift a heavy object, or exercise).



When your pelvic floor muscles are strong, they can help to:

- Prevent leakage from your bladder and bowel
- Reduce your symptoms of vaginal prolapse
- Improve your sexual sensation.

How to do I perform my pelvic floor muscle exercises?

- **Step 1:** First tighten the muscles around your anus as if you were trying to stop yourself from passing wind.
- **Step 2:** At the same time, tighten the muscles around the vagina, as if you are trying to stop the flow of urine. It should feel like a squeeze and a lift.
- **Step 3:** After each squeeze and lift, make sure you fully relax and loosen your muscles. This will allow your muscles to recover from the contraction and prepare for the next contraction.

You can find helpful explanations on how to do your pelvic floor exercises on the Association for Continence Advice website:

www.aca.uk.com/application/files/3815/7830/0331/Pelvic_Floor_Top_Tips.pdf

There are also 2 useful video links from NHS Lothian

Pelvic floor exercises: <https://vimeo.com/593193863/674bdd1458>

Bladder training: <https://vimeo.com/593194051/3922d527e5>

There are two types of pelvic floor exercises that you will need to practice:

- **Slow exercises** – Firstly tighten your pelvic floor muscles using steps 1 and 2 above. Hold the squeeze and lift for as many seconds as you can (up to a maximum of 10 seconds and repeat up to 10 times). You may only be able to hold the contraction for a couple of seconds and only a few in a row before your muscle gets tired, but this will improve with practice.
- **Quick exercises** – Using the steps 1, 2 and 3 above, squeeze and lift as quickly as you can, and then let go immediately. Do this up to 10 times

Hints and tips

- If you are finding it difficult to know whether you are using the correct muscles, you can try to stop or slow the flow of your urine halfway through emptying your bladder. Only stop or slow the flow of urine for a couple of seconds, then relax and finish emptying your bladder without straining. **This is not recommended as a regular exercise**
- Remember to breathe in and out as normal. Do not hold your breath as you are doing your exercises
- Relax the muscles of your stomach, thighs and bottom
- These exercises can be done lying down, sitting or standing. If you cannot feel your pelvic floor muscle contracting, change your position and try again
- Women familiar with using tampons can imagine squeezing their pelvic floor muscle as if pulling the tampon higher in the vagina
- You may find your lower stomach (below the level of your belly button) tightens or tenses during your exercises. This is normal as this part of your stomach works together with your pelvic floor muscles
- Pelvic floor muscles are like any other muscles and will get stronger if you train them. However, it can take around 12 weeks or longer to see improvements so it's important that you keep doing your exercises regularly
- If there are certain activities that cause you to leak urine (e.g. lifting heavy items or sneezing), you can squeeze and lift your pelvic floor muscle just before and during that activity. This is known as "The Knack"
- Try to do your exercises 3 times per day until you reach your target. You can then maintain your exercises by performing them 1-2 times per day.



Your exercise prescription

Slow exercises: Number of repetitions: _____ Squeeze time (seconds): _____

Fast exercises: Number of repetitions: _____

Frequency (how many times a day): _____

Position: _____

Exercise diary

Use this diary to record how many slow and quick exercises you do each day.

You can also perform and record your pelvic floor exercises using the NHS Squeezy App (£2.99)

The first box shows an example of how to fill in your diary for the week. The numbers may not be the same as your exercise prescription.

Example

		Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
		AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM
Slow exercises	Repetitions	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
	Squeeze time (seconds)	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5
Quick exercises	Repetitions	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6

Week 1

		Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
		AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM
Slow exercises	Repetitions																					
	Squeeze time (seconds)																					
Quick exercises	Repetitions																					

Week 2

		Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
		AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM
Slow exercises	Repetitions																					
	Squeeze time (seconds)																					
Quick exercises	Repetitions																					

Week 3

		Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
		AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM
Slow exercises	Repetitions																					
	Squeeze time (seconds)																					
Quick exercises	Repetitions																					

Week 4

		Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
		AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM
Slow exercises	Repetitions																					
	Squeeze time (seconds)																					
Quick exercises	Repetitions																					

Week 5

		Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
		AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM
Slow exercises	Repetitions																					
	Squeeze time (seconds)																					
Quick exercises	Repetitions																					

Week 6

		Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
		AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM	AM	Mid-day	PM
Slow exercises	Repetitions																					
	Squeeze time (seconds)																					
Quick exercises	Repetitions																					