



CENTRAL MARYLAND UROLOGY ASSOCIATES

Instructions: Exercising Pelvic Muscles

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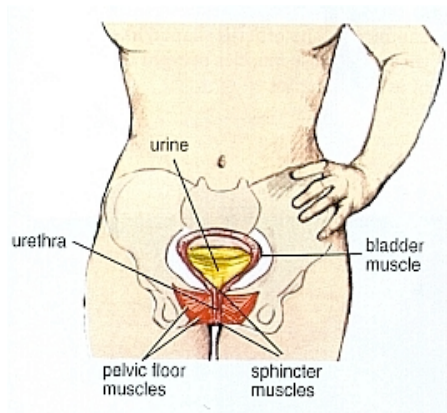
Why exercise pelvic muscles?

Life's events including pregnancy, childbirth, and being overweight can weaken pelvic muscles. Fortunately, when these muscles get weak, you can help strengthen them again. Women with bladder control problems can regain control through pelvic muscle exercises, also called Kegel exercises.

Exercising your pelvic floor muscles for just five minutes, three times a day, can make a big difference to your bladder control. These exercises strengthen muscles that hold the bladder and many other organs in place.

The part of your body including your hip bones is the pelvic area. At the bottom of the pelvis, several layers of muscle stretch between your legs. These muscles attach to the front, back and sides of the pelvis bone.

Two pelvic muscles do most of the work. The biggest one stretches like a hammock. The other is shaped like a triangle. These muscles prevent leaking of urine and stool.



How do you exercise your pelvic muscles?

It is very important to find the right muscles. Your doctor, nurse or physical therapist will help make sure you doing the exercises correctly.

You should tighten the two major muscles that stretch across your pelvic floor. They are the "hammock" muscle and the "triangle" muscle. Here are three methods to check for the correct muscles:

1. Try and stop the flow of urine when you are sitting on the toilet. If you can do it, you are using the correct muscles.
2. Imagine that you are trying to stop passing gas. Squeeze the muscles you would use. If you sense a "pulling" feeling, you are using the right muscles for pelvic exercises.
3. Lie down and put your finger inside your vagina. Squeeze as if you were trying to stop urine from coming out. If you feel a tightness on your finger, you are squeezing the right pelvic muscle.

Don't squeeze other muscles at the same time. Be careful not to tighten your stomach, legs, or other muscles. Squeezing the wrong muscles can put more pressure on your bladder control muscles. Just squeeze the pelvic muscle. Don't hold your breath.

Repeat but don't overdo it. At first, find a quiet spot to practice—your bathroom or bedroom—so you can concentrate. Lie on the floor. Pull in the pelvic muscles and hold for a count of three. Then relax for a count of three. Work up to 10 to 15 repeats each time you exercise. Be sure to do your pelvic exercises three times a day. Healthy sphincter muscles can keep the urethra closed.

When done correctly, pelvic exercises can be very effective for improving urinary continence.