

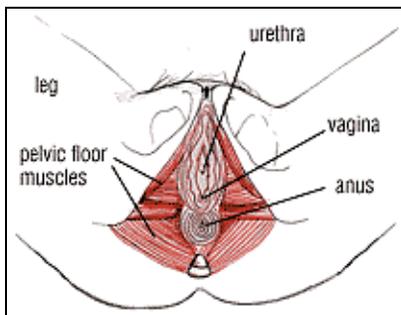
Exercising Your Pelvic Muscles

Why exercise pelvic floor muscles?

- By using pelvic floor muscle exercises you can get back the control of your bladder. These are also known as Kegel exercises. Exercising your pelvic floor muscles can make them stronger.
- Just 5 minutes, 3 times a day can make a big difference to your bladder control.

How do you exercise your pelvic muscles?

- Find the right muscles as shown below. The goal is to tighten the 2 major muscles that stretch across your pelvic floor. In day to day life, we are often not aware of these muscles, so you need to learn how to feel them:



You can make these pelvic floor muscles stronger with a few minutes of exercise every day.

your pelvic muscles. In particular, try to relax your stomach while you squeeze the pelvic muscles. Don't hold your breath.

Step 1: Learning to Feel the Muscles

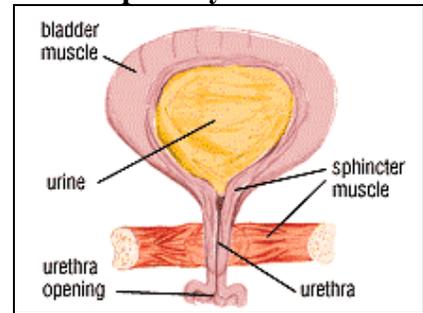
- Pretend that you are trying to stop passing gas. Squeeze the muscles you would use.
- If you are a woman, lie down and place a finger in your vagina and squeeze your muscles around it
- If you are a man, stand in front of a mirror and watch your penis while trying to make it move up and down without moving another part of your body

Step 2: Learning to Isolate the Muscles

- Be careful not to tighten your stomach, legs, or other muscles at the same time as you contract

Step 3: Practicing Pelvic Exercises

- Squeeze the pelvic muscles and hold for a count of 3. Then relax for a count of 3. Work up to doing this **10 to 15 times. This is one set. Then do one set 3 times per day.**
- Try to practice this in 3 different positions. If convenient, do 1 set lying, 1 set sitting, and 1 set standing. If this is not convenient, just do them where you feel most comfortable. You can exercise while lying on the bed or couch, sitting at a desk, couch or chair, or standing anywhere.
- Start by doing this at least 3 to 4 times a week. As you get better at it, try to do it daily.
- Over time, try to hold the squeeze harder and for longer, aiming for a count of 6 to 8. Don't forget to relax for the same amount of time between squeezes.



Healthy sphincter muscles can keep the urethra closed.

Step 4: When Will I Notice Improvement?

- Many women do notice an improvement after a few weeks. However, you may not feel your bladder control improve until after **3 to 6 weeks** of doing the exercises 3 times per day.
- After you train yourself to tighten the pelvic muscles, you will have fewer accidents.
- These exercises need to be continued in order to have lasting effect, just like any other form of exercise.
- If you are having a hard time doing these exercises or find you are not making progress, ask your doctor whether biofeedback might be helpful for you.

NIDDK National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse

Adapted by the UCLA Division of Geriatrics and the University of Chicago Section of Geriatrics

For more information, contact:

National Association for Continence www.nafc.org (800) BLADDER

The Simon Foundation for Continence www.simonfoundation.org (800) 23-SIMON

American Urological Association www.aa.net.org (410) 727-1000