

Kegel exercises

Pelvic floor muscles

These simple pelvic floor exercises strengthen the muscles that hold your bladder, bowel, uterus and help you control your urination. We all need to do these exercises to prevent further weakness or to help strengthen these muscles. It is never too late to start doing these Kegel exercises.

1. Finding the right muscle

To do Kegels, you have to find the correct muscles to squeeze. Try to relax and focus on the pelvic floor muscles by imagining that you are holding back urine and/or bowel movement. Squeeze the muscles you would use to do that.

2. Doing your Kegel exercises

Now that you know what muscle to focus on and squeeze,

Here's how:

- a. You can stand, sit or lie down to do these exercises
- b. Focus and squeeze your pelvic floor muscles (do not hold your breath; tighten your stomach or thighs muscles)
- c. Start the squeeze as if you were trying to hold in some urine or gas.

There are 2 types of squeezes to do:

- i. Squeeze and hold the squeeze for about 5-10 seconds.
 1. Relax the muscles for the same amount of time (5-10 sec)

Each squeeze and relaxation is one repetition. Repeat the repetition at least 20 times (this would be a set of 20 slow contractions). Repeat these sets at 3-5 times a day

- ii. Squeeze and hold the squeeze for 1 second
 1. Relax the muscles for 1 second

Repeat these 10 times (set of 10 quick contractions). Repeat this set of 10 also 3-5

times a day.

3. Working Kegels into your daily life

Like any muscle of the body, the pelvic floor muscles will only stay strong as long as you exercise them. You will realize that these pelvic floor exercises are not strenuous or difficult. **Remembering** to do them is our challenge!

Like all new routines, you have to get into the habit of doing them.

Consider your day and choose times and places that you can concentrate on doing these exercises.

(Examples: while driving, with T.V. commercials, waiting in line, in waiting rooms, before getting dressed in the morning or at bedtime) It will take less than 5 minutes to do these sets of exercises.

Also-Do these Kegels when you need them most: Learn to do them just before sneezing, coughing, lifting or straining.

Remember, the more you do your Kegels, the stronger your pelvic floor muscles can become. If you stop doing your Kegels, the muscles may further weaken.

Do them regularly. You may also gradually increase the repetitions or sets to further challenge and strengthen the muscles. It is **not a good idea** to do Kegel exercises while you are in the bathroom urinating. This may confuse the bladder and contribute to incomplete bladder emptying.

References-Canadian Continenence Foundation