

Urogynaecology services: Pelvic floor muscle exercises and bladder retraining

Department of Gynaecology

Information for Patients

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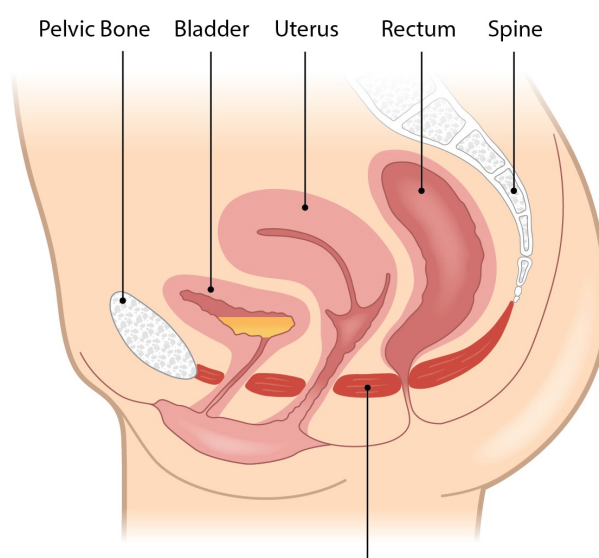
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This information is for use by women under the care of the urogynaecology team.

What is the pelvic floor?

The pelvic muscles support the pelvic organs (bladder, uterus and rectum). These muscles form a sling, running from the pubic bone to the bottom of the spine. These muscles help control wind, wee and poo.



Normal pelvic floor muscles

What happens with a weak pelvic floor?

You can leak pee on physical movement or activity. This is called stress incontinence. This can be when you cough, sneeze, exercise or lift.

You can leak pee with a sudden and strong feeling to empty your bladder. This is called urge incontinence.

You can have both types of symptoms. Some women can also feel a bulge or something coming down or coming out of the vagina. This is called pelvic organ prolapse.

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How can I stop this?

Pelvic floor exercises can help with leaking pee. You need to exercise your pelvic floor muscle. The exercise programme will help to make your pelvic floor muscle strong.

How do you do the exercise?

1. Find the muscles

First you need to find your pelvic floor muscles:

1. Try to tighten your muscles around your vagina and back passage.
2. Lift these muscles upwards, like you are trying to stop yourself from passing pee/wind at the same time.
3. You should feel a gentle squeeze when you do this.

2. Contract the muscles correctly

The contraction is an upward and inward tightening, not a pushing down effort. When you first start the exercise, check that you are doing them correctly.

- You must not feel your belly, thighs or butt tighten. This could be working the wrong muscles.
- Do not hold your breath. You should be able to count out loud whilst doing the exercise.

The exercise programme

Your specialist nurse or physiotherapist will examine your pelvic floor muscle. You will be set a structured exercise programme. This makes sure you are using the correct group of muscles and that you are doing them correctly.

Grade of pelvic floor muscle	
How many seconds can you hold the contraction? Always release the contraction and rest for 4 seconds.	
How many times can you repeat the contraction?	
How many quick contractions can you do?	

Repeat your exercise programme every day.

This will help strengthen the muscles. The muscles can then work harder for longer.

It is important that the muscles can react quickly, for example when you cough/sneeze.

Overtime you can hold each contraction longer and do quick contractions. You should be able to hold for 10 seconds. Then 10 times in a row. Then do 10 quick contractions. You will then only need to do them once a day to keep your muscles strong.

The benefits of doing pelvic floor exercises

- They are simple, free and work well.
- You do not need any special equipment.

How to make time for the exercise?

- Set a reminder on your mobile phone. Use stickers around the house to remind you.
- You can do the exercises before meal times or before a certain task.
- It may take 3 to 6 months to see real improvement. Routine exercises are the key!

A normal bladder

The bladder usually holds between 400 to 600mls of urine. It is normal to go to the toilet about 5 to 7 times a day. Sometimes once at night.

Fluid intake

Not drinking enough can lead to concentrated (darkened) urine. This can irritate the bladder and make you want to go to the toilet more. You should aim to drink between 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid a day. Drink this throughout the day spaced out.

Drinks that contain caffeine (tea, coffee, hot chocolate, green tea and Coca-Cola) can make you pee more often. If you have an overactive bladder, these drinks can make you feel like you need to pee more often.

Begin to drink less caffeine slowly over 2 weeks. Do not stop straight away. It can cause headaches. Fizzy drinks, acidic fruit juices and alcohol can also irritate the bladder.

Constipation

Struggling to have a poo can damage the pelvic floor muscles. It is important to eat a balanced diet.

Lifting

Lifting puts a strain on the pelvic floor muscles. Try not to lift heavy objects. But if you have to, remember to squeeze and lift your pelvic floor muscles before lifting to support the pelvic organs.

The knack

To make sure you don't leak you need to use your pelvic floor muscles. When you need to cough or sneeze, squeeze your pelvic floor muscle which should help to shut the valve on the tube that you pass urine through. This will help to stop leaking. This is called "The knack".

Learning to use your pelvic floor muscles at the right time is a skill like learning any other new muscle activity. At first it might be hard. With practice and as the muscle gets stronger this should help you to stop yourself from passing pee/wind.

Weight

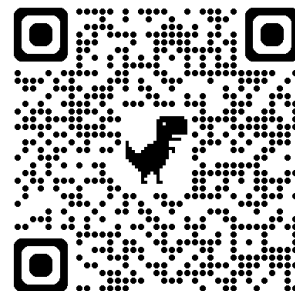
Being overweight can put more strain on your pelvic floor muscle. Weight loss can help reduce the strain that is put on this muscle.

Smoking

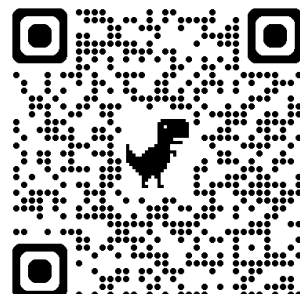
People that smoke may suffer with overactive bladder symptoms as nicotine can affect the bladder muscle. Coughing can weaken the pelvic floor muscle and cause you to leak.

Useful links

<https://squeezezyapp.com/https://www.bladderandbowel.org/downloads/>



<https://www.bladderandbowel.org/downloads/>





Contact details:

Urogynaecology Nursing Office:

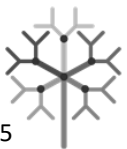
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Remember pelvic floor exercises are for life!

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