



Kegel Exercises - Female

Pelvic floor muscle exercises, also known as **Kegel exercises**, strengthen the pelvic floor muscles. These exercises are the most important and effective exercises for improving awareness and maintaining strength in the pelvic floor musculature. Like other muscles of the body, if the pelvic muscles get weak or overly tense they are no longer efficient at doing their job. In addition these muscles serve as the “on and off switch” for the bladder and dysfunction in these muscles often leads to bladder and pelvic symptoms.

How to identify the correct muscles

To find the pelvic floor muscles, you may place your finger inside your vagina or your rectum. Try to squeeze the muscles around your finger. This is the same muscle you use to hold back gas or a bowel movement.

Avoid using your stomach, leg, or buttock muscles. Tighten only the muscles of your pelvic floor. Rest your hand on your abdomen to make sure you are not using your abdominal muscles.

Doing the exercises

Gradually, not quickly, squeeze your pelvic floor muscles and hold for a count of five seconds. Then relax the muscle while you take a slow breath in and exhale. In the beginning you may not be able to hold for the entire 5 seconds, but keep practicing. It will get easier as your pelvic floor gets stronger.

Do one to three sets of 10 in the morning, afternoon, and at bedtime.

At first you may find it more comfortable to do the exercises while reclining in a chair or even lying down in bed. With time and practice these exercises can be done anywhere at any time. If you are doing them correctly nobody can see you doing them.

Do not hold your breath. This makes it more difficult for the muscles to work.

After each contraction be sure to let the muscles relax completely. This is important for those who are learning to relax the pelvic floor muscles because of pelvic pain, muscle spasms, or difficulty emptying the bladder.

When will I notice a change?

Strength and control builds slowly; do not expect to see results right away. Improvement varies from person to person, but a general rule is to allow at least 4-6 weeks before expecting to see a significant change in your symptoms. Continued exercise is required to maintain continued benefit.