

UrologyWest

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INFORMATION LEAFLET: PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

Although with practice, pelvic floor exercises can be done anywhere and anytime, it is best to learn the exercises in the following position:

Sit on a chair, toilet seat or toilet lid. Make sure that your feet are flat on the floor and your legs are slightly apart. Lean forwards, resting your elbows on your knees.

There are two types of exercises – **slow twitch** and **fast twitch**. It is important that you do the slow twitch first and then the fast twitch each time you exercise your pelvic floor muscles.

To perform the slow twitch exercises:

1. Close and draw up the muscles around back passage, as if you are trying to stop passing wind. Make sure that you do **not** contract your buttock muscles while you do this.
2. Now close and draw up the muscles around your vagina and urethra, as though you are trying to stop the flow of urine.
3. **Hold for a count of five.** Try not to hold your breath, breathe normally.
4. Then **slowly** relax and let go.
5. Repeat five times in total

To perform the fast twitch exercises:

1. Pull up the pelvic floor muscles as before.
2. Hold for one second and then relax.
3. Repeat 5-10 times or until your muscles feel tired.

The pelvic floor muscles tire easily and you may notice that it takes a lot of concentration to begin with to do these exercises correctly.

If you find that the muscles 'let go' too quickly and that you cannot hold for a count of five, just hold them for as long as you can. Use this as your baseline. For example, if you can only hold the contraction for a count of three, then every time you do your exercises, contract the muscles for a count of three. Gradually try to work up to four, then five.

It is important to try **not to**:

- squeeze your buttocks together
- bring your knees together
- hold your breath
- lift your shoulders/ eyebrows or toes upwards

If you do any of these, you are not contracting (tightening) your muscles correctly.

How often should I do my exercises?

Practice five pelvic floor contractions (as explained previously) five times a day. Make sure that it is a good contraction every time. You can feel your pelvic floor contracting by putting one or two fingers into your vagina whilst having a bath or shower. Tighten your pelvic floor so that the muscles squeeze your finger hard.

Every two weeks, test the strength of your pelvic floor by stopping the flow of urine mid-stream. This will feel similar to the exercises above and uses the same muscles. You may not be able to completely stop the flow of urine to begin with, but you may notice that you are able to slow the flow down. This is your baseline assessment. Gradually over the weeks you should notice an improvement. It is important that you do not do this test more than once a fortnight as it may cause problems with your bladder. This is just a test to see how you are progressing.

Do not expect instant results!

It will take several weeks of regular exercise to regain the strength in your pelvic floor muscles. You need to do these exercises for the rest of your life. If you stop exercising, your problems will return.