

Activating your pelvic floor – the importance of breathing

When doing any pelvic floor exercise, you need to do something called diaphragmatic breathing. This simply means taking deep breaths into the lumbar region (the area between the pelvis and chest). This technique activates the diaphragm, which in turn engages the pelvic floor muscles. Don't hold your breath during the exercises. Keep breathing freely, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through a slightly opened mouth. At the end of each repetition always relax for twice as long as you have held the active position.



The after-dribble

A very common and embarrassing problem is a small urine leak from the urethra after leaving the toilet. This can result in a damp patch, especially noticeable on lightly coloured trousers.

This can be prevented by either tightening the pelvic floor muscles after fully emptying the bladder, or by placing your hand behind the scrotum and applying firm pressure upwards and slightly forward. Any urine left in the urethra will be expelled into the urinal or toilet.



About your pelvic floor muscles

The pelvic floor muscles extend from the pubic bone to the base of the spine (see diagram).

There are two openings in the pelvic floor, one for the urethra (the passageway that carries urine from the bladder), and one through which the bowel empties.

The pelvic floor muscles:

- ▶ Support the lower abdomen organs, especially the bladder and bowel
- ▶ Assist normal bladder and bowel function and prevent leakage (incontinence)
- ▶ Contribute to sexual function

How to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles

Pelvic floor exercises help to reduce episodes of incontinence, it is therefore recommended to do them routinely. You will need to learn, and regularly carry out, your pelvic floor muscle training programme. To begin, choose a quiet time and place, so you can concentrate on learning the exercises correctly.

- ▶ Exercise in a well-ventilated room. Use a mat and wear suitable, loose clothing
- ▶ Do not eat for at least an hour beforehand
- ▶ Empty your bladder first
- ▶ Repeat each exercise 3 to 5 times. Hold the position for the duration instructed
- ▶ Every exercise has a starting position and an active position. Depending on your general condition, hold the active position for 3, 5, 7 seconds. After some practice, you will be able to hold the active position for longer
- ▶ Exercise should never cause pain. Remember, it is not about the quantity, but the quality of the practice
- ▶ To see a change, you must exercise regularly
- ▶ Finally, please ensure that you follow any advice, recommendations and treatment plan discussed with your Specialist or GP. Pelvic floor exercises are not a replacement for regular check ups, but they can make a real difference

Incontinence

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Pelvic floor exercises for men



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The following exercises can be done individually - choose the position that is most comfortable for you

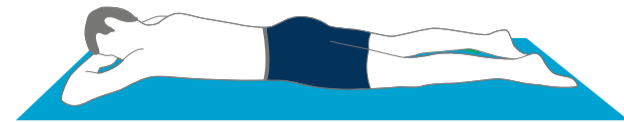
#02

Bridge

Starting position: Lie on your back, knees bent. Place your hands freely alongside your body with palms facing down.

Exercise: As in exercise 1, squeeze the muscles around the rectum and the urethra, pull the lower belly in towards the spine and tighten the lower abdominal muscles.

- ▶ Raise your pelvis slightly off the floor and maintain that position for 3, 5 and then 7 seconds.
- ▶ Each time slowly lower the pelvis back down on to the mat and relax the muscles that have been tensed.
- ▶ At the end of each repetition always relax for twice as long as you have held the active position.



#03

Prone position

Starting position: Lie face down on the mat, with your hands palm down under your forehead. Have your legs stretched out and slightly apart.

Exercise: Whilst breathing out, straighten your spine and tense the muscles around your rectum and urethra.

- ▶ Pull the lower belly in slightly towards the spine and tighten the lower abdominal muscles.
- ▶ Gently push your ankles and hips into the mat. Hold the squeeze for 3, 5 and then 7 seconds then slowly relax the muscles back into the starting position.
- ▶ At the end of each repetition always relax for twice as long as you have held the active position.

#01

Breathing

Starting position: Lie on your back, with knees bent and hands resting on the sides of your belly.

Exercise: Start by activating the muscles around the rectum by tightening them as if you were holding wind.

- ▶ Squeeze the lower abdomen slightly in towards the spine and tense the muscles around the urethra as if you were trying to stop the flow of urine.
- ▶ Keep your buttocks pressed against the mat.
- ▶ Gradually extend how long you hold this squeeze from 3 to 5 and then 7 seconds.
- ▶ Slowly relax all muscles as you breathe out.
- ▶ At the end of each repetition always relax for twice as long as you have held the active position.

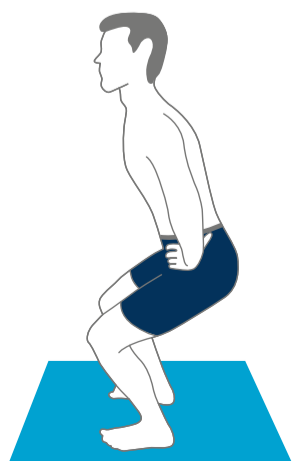
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Half squat

Starting position: Stand with your legs hip-width apart and bend your knees slightly. Either place your hands on your hips with the elbows pointing outward; or rest your hands on your thighs, above your knees.

Exercise: Tighten the muscles around the rectum and urethra.

- ▶ Gently pull the lower belly in towards the spine and tense the lower abdomen muscles.
- ▶ As you breathe in, push the hips and pelvis slightly forward. Hold in the active position for 3, 5, 7 and then 10 seconds.
- ▶ As you breathe out, relax the muscles and return your hips and pelvis to the starting position.
- ▶ At the end of each repetition always relax for twice as long as you have held the active position.



Pelvic floor exercises for men

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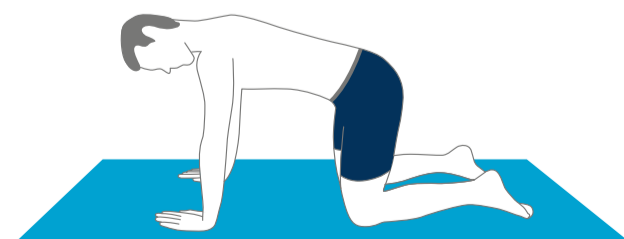
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Cat pose

Starting position: Kneel on all fours. Place your palms on the floor shoulder-width apart and knees hip-width apart. Keep your arms straight and head in line with the body.

Exercise: Whilst inhaling, round your back up towards the ceiling while also tightening the muscles around the rectum and urethra.

- ▶ Pull the lower belly slightly in towards the spine and tighten the lower abdominal muscles.
- ▶ Hold that position for 3, 5, 7 and then 10 seconds.
- ▶ Whilst exhaling, relax all muscles and gradually return your back to the straight starting position. Avoid leaning your head backwards.
- ▶ At the end of each repetition always relax for twice as long as you have held the active position.



#05

Sitting on heels

Starting position: Sit on your heels, placing your hands freely on your thighs with palms facing down.

Exercise: Tighten the muscles around the rectum and urethra. Pull the lower belly in towards the spine and squeeze the lower abdominal muscles.

- ▶ Push your ankles down into the mat and gently push the hips and pelvis forward.
- ▶ Hold in this active position for 3, 5 and then 7 seconds; slowly relaxing the muscles at the end of each repetition.
- ▶ Slowly relaxing the muscles at the end of each repetition and always relax for twice as long as you have held the active position.

