

Exercises to Strengthen Your Pelvic Floor Muscles

The pelvic floor is made up of muscles that give support to your abdominal organs, bladder, and rectum. These muscles also help control the flow of urine, bowel movements and passing gas. When these muscles are weak, you can leak urine and feces, or have other urine control problems such as having a strong urge to urinate, but not making it to the restroom on time. Weak pelvic floor muscles may also affect your sexual function. Kegel or pelvic floor exercises can help strengthen these muscles.

Causes of weak pelvic floor muscles may include:

- Pregnancy
- Childbirth
- Obesity
- Surgery
- Age
- Radiation to pelvic area
- Side effect of a medicine

What are the steps for a Kegel exercise?

1. Find a quiet place away from others so you can focus.
2. Lie on your back with a pillow under your knees.
3. Locate the muscles you need to use during this exercise. To find the right muscles, think about how it feels when:
 - You stop your stream of urine
 - Try not to pass gas

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

4. Tighten your pelvic floor muscles.
- Hold for _____ seconds. Relax for _____ seconds.
 - Repeat _____ times, _____ times each day.
 - ▶ It is important to relax in between each muscle squeeze. Let your muscles go loose; do not push down.
 - ▶ Do not strain, hold your breath or use your buttock or thigh muscles while you do this exercise.
 - ▶ Count out loud to keep from straining.
 - ▶ Doing this exercise right is more important than the number of times you do the exercise.
5. For an extra challenge, tighten your pelvic floor muscles when you breathe out.

Are there any precautions I should take when doing Kegel exercises?

Do not do Kegel exercises:

- If you have pelvic pain.
- While you are going to the bathroom. This can hurt your bladder and may cause urinary tract infections.

Other types of Kegel Exercises

Follow these additional directions **only** if your physical therapist puts a check (✓) in the box by the exercise.

Contract and Relax:

- Contract pelvic floor and hold for _____ seconds.
- Relax for _____ seconds.
- Repeat _____ times.



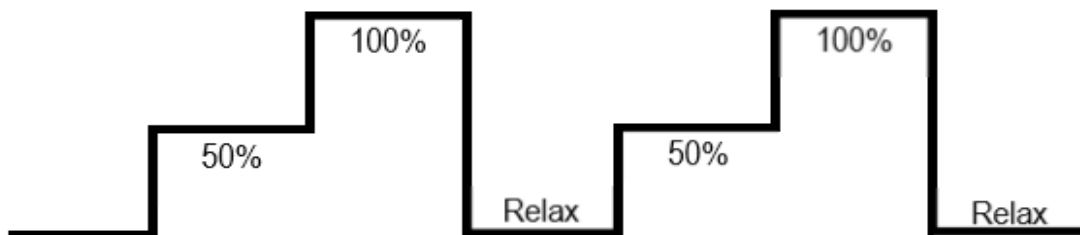
□ **Endurance Contract and Relax:**

- Contract pelvic floor and hold for ____ seconds.
- Relax for ____ seconds.
- Repeat ____ times.



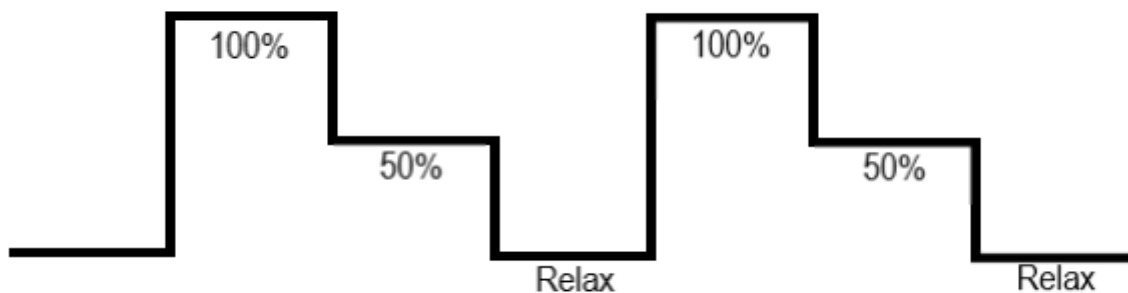
□ **Step-Up Contraction:**

- Contract pelvic floor at 50% of your max for ____ seconds.
- Increase contraction to 100% for ____ seconds.
- Relax for ____ seconds.
- Repeat ____ times.



□ **Step-Down Contraction:**

- Contract pelvic floor at 100% for ____ seconds.
- Decrease contraction to 50% for ____ seconds.
- Relax for ____ seconds.
- Repeat ____ times.



Talk to your doctor or physical therapist if your symptoms do not improve with these exercises.