

## Kegel Exercises for Women

---

Kegel exercises help strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. When these muscles are weak, you can leak urine and feces. Talk to your health care provider about making an appointment with a Pelvic Floor Therapist to learn specific exercises to help you manage this problem.

### What are 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. Weak pelvic muscles may also affect your sexual function.

Causes of weak pelvic floor muscles may include:

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

### What is a Kegel exercise?

A Kegel exercise is when you relax and tighten the muscles you use to control the flow of urine. Kegel exercises are easy to do and can be done anytime.

---

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

## **How do I find the right muscles?**

To find the right muscles, try the following:

- Think about how it feels when you try to start and stop your urine stream.
- A pelvic floor therapist can work with you to create an exercise program to help make these muscles stronger.

## **What are the steps for these exercises?**

- Start by lying down so you are relaxed.
- Breathe in, relaxing your belly and pelvic floor, then breathe out while tightening your pelvic floor.
- Do not tighten your belly, buttocks or thigh muscles when you are doing these exercises.
- Squeeze your muscles for a count of 4 then relax for a count of 4. At first, you may only be able to squeeze your muscles for 1 to 2 seconds. As your muscles get stronger, you will be able to hold for a count of 4.
- When squeezing for a count of 4 becomes easy, you can increase the squeezing to a count of 8. Do this for 5 minutes 2 times each day.
- It is important to relax in between each muscle squeeze. Let your muscles go loose; do not push down.

## **Where can I do these exercises?**

When you first start doing the exercises, find a place away from others so you can focus. After you have done them for a while, you can do these exercises anytime and anywhere. It often takes 6 to 12 weeks to see results if you do these exercises regularly.

## **Are there any precautions?**

- Breathe while you do your exercises. Do not hold your breath. This may put more pressure on your pelvic muscles.
- Follow the directions that your health care team has given you.
- Do not do these exercises if you are having pelvic pain.
- Do not do these exercises if you have a foley or urinary catheter in place.