

Pelvic Floor Exercises (Kegel's)

What are they? The pelvic floor muscles are the support structures that form a bowl like structure in the pelvis. They are the muscles responsible for bladder and bowel control, and give your core support in general when you are standing. These muscles can become weakened over time as a result of pregnancy and childbirth, surgery, and aging. Specific symptoms that develop due to the weakening of these muscles are urinary or bowel incontinence. Certain exercises have been developed to help improve the strength of these muscles and to decrease the symptoms mentioned.

How do pelvic floor exercises help? The pelvic floor muscles help hold the bladder and urethra in place, as well as help hold the urethra closed. Weakened pelvic floor muscles may allow urine to leak. Kegel's help strengthen these muscles and gives you more control over bladder function.

How do I learn to do them? There are two ways to identify the muscles in order to help you learn to control them and perform the exercises. One is to stop the flow of urine when voiding, this should ONLY be done to identify these muscles, not routinely to practice, as this can further affect bladder function. The second way to help you familiarize yourself with the pelvic floor muscles is to place 1-2 fingers in your vagina and try to squeeze the muscles around them. That is the sensation that you want to replicate when doing Kegels.

When and how often should I do them? Once you know how to do these exercises correctly you can do them anywhere at anytime, just remember to do them. You can do these exercises 3 times day, in sets of 8-12, holding the contraction for approximately 8-10 seconds with each. Remember to relax between contractions. Initially it may not be possible to hold the exercise for 8-12 seconds, but you will be able to work up to that with practice. If you have a sudden urge to run to the bathroom, sit or stand still and contract your pelvic muscles. After the urge diminishes, you can then go ahead to the toilet. Also do the exercises when you cough/laugh/sneeze to avoid leaking.

