



CORNERSTONE MEDICAL CLINIC

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Kegel Exercises

Life's events can weaken pelvic muscles. Pregnancy, childbirth and being overweight can do it. Luckily, when these muscles get weak, you can make them strong again.

Pelvic floor muscles are just like other muscles. Exercise can make them stronger. Women with bladder control problems can regain control through pelvic muscles exercises called Kegel exercises.

Exercising your pelvic floor muscles for just 5 minutes, three times a day can make a big difference to your bladder control. Exercise strengthens muscles that hold the bladder and many other organs in place.

The part of your body including your hip bones is the pelvic area. At the bottom of the pelvis, several layers of muscle stretch between your legs. The muscles attach to the front, back and sides of the pelvis bone. Two pelvic muscles do most of the work. The largest one stretches like a hammock. The other is shaped like a triangle. These muscles prevent the leaking of urine and stool.

To exercise these muscles it is very important to find the right muscles. Here are three methods to check for the correct muscles.

1. Try to stop the flow of urine when you are sitting on the toilet. If you can do it, you are using the right muscles.
2. Imagine that you are trying to stop the passage of gas. Squeeze the muscles you would use. If you sense a "pulling" feeling, those are the right muscles.
3. Lie down and put your finger inside your vagina. Squeeze as if you were trying to stop urine from coming out. If you feel tightness on your finger, you are squeezing the right pelvic muscles.

Don't squeeze other muscles at the same time. Be careful not to tighten your stomach, legs or other muscles. Squeezing the wrong muscles can put more pressure on your bladder control muscles. Just squeeze the pelvic muscles. Don't hold your breath.

Repeat, but don't overdo it. At first, find a quiet place to practice, like your bedroom or bathroom. Concentrate. Lie on the floor. Pull in the pelvic muscles and hold for a count of three. Then relax for a count of three. Work up to 10 to 15 repeats each time you exercise.

Do your pelvic exercises at least three times a day. Every day, use three positions: lying, sitting and standing. You can exercise while lying on the floor or a bed, sitting at a desk, driving or standing in the kitchen. Using all three positions make the muscles strongest.

Be patient. Don't give up. It's just 5 minutes, three times a day. You may not feel your bladder control improve until after 3 to 6 weeks. Still, most women do notice an improvement after a few weeks.

Hold the squeeze 'til after the sneeze. You can also protect your pelvic muscles from more damage by bracing yourself. Think ahead, just before sneezing, coughing, lifting or jumping. Sudden pressure from such actions can hurt those pelvic muscles. Squeeze your pelvic muscles tightly and hold on until after you sneeze, cough, lift or jump. After training yourself to tighten the pelvic muscles for these moments, you will have fewer accidents.

Reprint courtesy of the National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearing House.