

PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE EXERCISES

Special pelvic floor muscle exercises were developed by a doctor named Kegel (so they are sometimes called "Kegels"). They work in mild cases of stress incontinence because incontinence is often related to weak pelvic floor muscles. Since these inner muscles are under our voluntary control, we can exercise them to build up their strength and bulk, like a body builder builds up outer muscles.

Why Do the Exercises

The pelvic floor muscles act as a sling to keep the bladder and bladder neck lifted; they also form the external sphincter. Sometimes these muscles weaken, allowing pelvic organs to drop down. By doing specific exercises over a period of time, you can tighten up and strengthen the pelvic floor and sphincter muscles.

How to Do Them

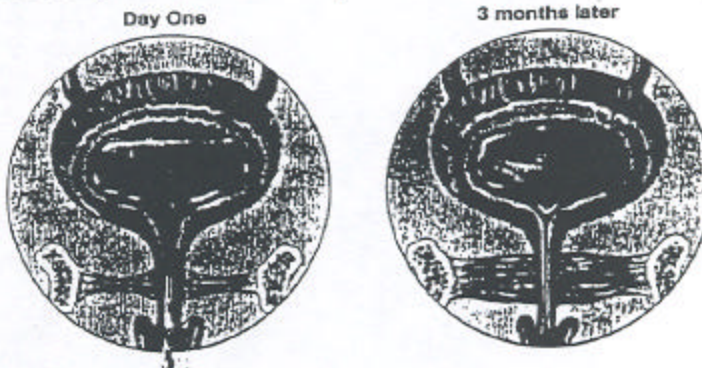
1. Sit on the toilet and start to urinate. Try to stop the flow of urine midstream by contracting (tightening) your pelvic floor muscles. These are the same muscles used to stop a bowel movement.

2. Repeat several times, until you are sure of the action and sensation of consciously contracting these muscles. Do not tighten your abdominal, leg, or buttock muscles.

3. An alternate way to exercise the pelvic floor muscles is with a small vaginal weight, which you insert briefly in the vagina. Holding the weight in makes you contract the right muscles.

When to Do Them

For stress incontinence, repeat the exercise four times, holding each contraction for a count of four. Do this every hour, whether at your desk, or watching TV. They must be performed daily for at least 2-3 months to be effective.



Before: Weak, thin pelvic floor muscles can't support bladder neck. Sphincter is weak and leakage occurs.

After: Stronger, thicker pelvic floor muscles restore sphincter strength. No more leakage.



Practice pelvic floor muscle exercises while urinating. When you relax the muscles, they let urine out.

Tightening the pelvic floor muscles stops the flow midstream. Repeat the relaxation and contraction.

Bladder Drill

For urge incontinence, the same exercise can be used to do a "bladder drill" that retrains your bladder. When the external sphincter contracts, it signals the bladder to relax, so the urge eventually subsides. Every time you feel urinary urgency, try to stop the feeling by contracting the pelvic floor muscles. Try to hold your urine a little longer each time, gradually increasing the time between urinating to 2, 3, or _____ hours. You should start to see improvement in 2-3 weeks.