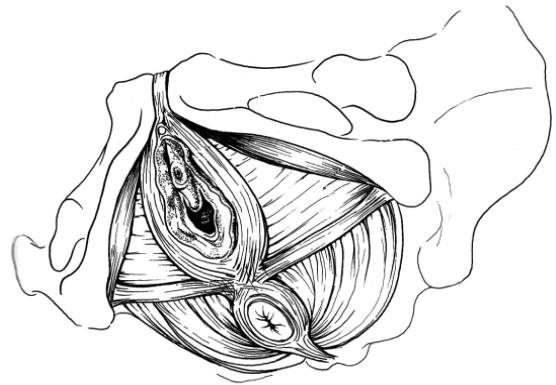


Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises

Why Pelvic Floor muscle exercises?

- 1) To improve bowel and bladder control
- 2) To improve sexual function
- 3) To improve pelvic organ support
- 4) To improve postural stability



Important things to think about when doing your pelvic floor muscle exercises:

1) Position

Start in a position where you feel the sensation of your pelvic floor the best. For most people this will be either lying down or sitting.

2) Concentration/Focus

Perform exercises in a quiet place with few distractions where you can focus

3) Squeeze and lift

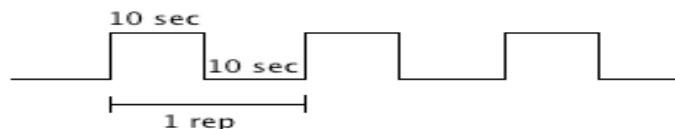
Squeeze the muscles around the openings (urethra/vagina/anus) and lift the pelvic floor muscles. Do not hold your breath or squeeze your thigh, buttock or abdominal muscles.

4) Relax

Ensure you relax (stop squeezing) after each contraction and rest at least as long as you hold

5) Amount

Basic Strength



Start with basic strength type exercises:

- **Begin** with relaxed pelvic floor muscles and breathing regularly
- **Squeeze** (close urethra/vagina/anus) **and lift** the pelvic floor muscles
- **Hold** as long as you can until you feel the muscles stop holding, or you feel you are starting to use other muscles (like your buttocks or groin muscles)
- **Relax**/stop squeezing for 10 seconds
- **Repeat** 10 times the squeeze/lift/hold/relax sequence
- **Perform** 10 repetitions 3 times per day (3 sets of 10 repetitions per day).

Do these exercises regularly for 3 months. If you still have symptoms after 3 months, please consult your health care practitioner and/or consult a pelvic health physiotherapist in your community. You can find a pelvic health physiotherapist near you by going to www.physiotherapyalberta.ca

Moving Ahead with Your Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises

1) Week 1: Hold your pelvic floor contractions for the time you can (as determined from your basic strength training). If you squeeze and lift for 5 seconds and feel the muscles fatigue or relax after that, your hold time will be 5 seconds for that whole week. Make sure you relax between contractions (feeling your floor muscles relax or “drop” when you stop the contraction).

2) The following week, add one second to your hold time. To use the example above, during your second week of exercise, you would hold your muscle squeeze/lift for 6 seconds, and relax for 10 seconds before repeating. Add one second to your hold time per week. Examples are in the table below:

Week	Hold time	Relax time	repetitions	sets
1	5 seconds	10 seconds	10	3
2	6 seconds	10 seconds	10	3
3	7 seconds	10 seconds	10	3
4	8 seconds	10 seconds	10	3

3) Work up to three sets of 10 repetitions (hold the squeeze/lift for 10 seconds then relax 10 sec).

4) Progress to different positions: Once you can hold 10 seconds and relax 10 seconds (as above), begin to perform your exercises in more challenging positions such as:

a) *Sitting* - knees together, knees apart

b) *Standing* – feet hip width apart, feet wide apart

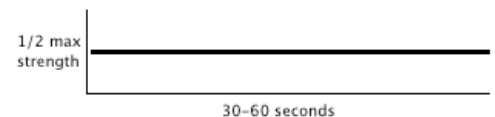
5) Progressing to different types of contractions: Once you have reached the ability to hold 10 seconds and relax 10 seconds for 3 sets, you can start doing:

a) **Speed Contractions:** squeeze your pelvic muscles quickly and relax right away. Make sure you have completely relaxed your pelvic floor muscles before starting the next contraction (do 2 sets of 5 repetitions and work up to 1 set of 10).



b) **Endurance contractions:** squeeze and lift your pelvic floor muscles ½ of your best strength and hold as long as you can (30-60 seconds). Relax completely the same length of time that you held. Keep breathing throughout the hold and the relax.

You can tailor your daily exercises to your needs. Perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions of either strength, endurance and/or speed contractions daily. Focus on the exercises more that you find are challenging for you.



6) Knack (pre-contraction of pelvic floor muscles): **Before** activities such as lifting, pushing, pulling or coughing, sneezing, laughing, you should do a quick, strong squeeze and lift of your pelvic floor muscles. Breathe out as you do the activity. Example: for lifting: “knack” and then exhale while lifting the object

7) Maintenance Program: When you are seeing an improvement in your pelvic floor symptoms, you can continue with a maintenance program. This will help you maintain the gains you have made. Do your exercises three to four days per week.