



Helpful Tips

- Avoid constipation. Straining to empty your bowel may make bladder and bowel problems worse. It is important to sit relaxed on the toilet seat with your feet supported and knees higher than your hips.
- Seek medical advice for hayfever, asthma and bronchitis to reduce sneezing and coughing.
- Avoid tea, coffee and cola. These contain caffeine and may irritate the bladder.
- Tighten your pelvic floor muscles before coughing, sneezing or lifting.
- If you are overweight, losing weight helps in reducing extra strain on the pelvic floor muscles.
- Avoid lifting heavy weights.
- It can take three to five months before you notice an improvement. Therefore, it is important to be persistent.

For further information or advice, please contact:

The Continence Advisory Service (East Berkshire)
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www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk

Pelvic Muscle Exercises for Men

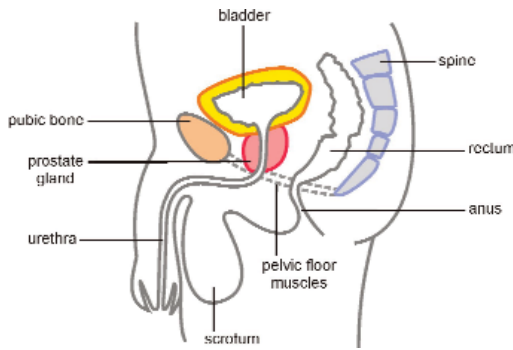
From the Continence Advisory Service



Pelvic floor muscle exercises are a very effective method of treatment for men with bladder problems. Weak pelvic floor muscles can cause what is known as stress incontinence, where urine leaks out when you cough, sneeze, laugh or do exercises such as running or jumping.

Where is your pelvic floor?

Your pelvic floor is a set of muscles that reach from your pubic bone at the front to your coccyx at the base of your spine.



They form squeezing muscles around the anus and the urethra (the tube which carries urine from the bladder) and are the muscles you use when you want to stop yourself passing wind or urine. It is also thought that the pelvic floor muscles play an important part in maintaining an erection.

Why is it important to do pelvic floor exercises?

Exercises help to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. A strong pelvic floor will help to prevent

urinary and bowel incontinence by supporting your bladder and bowel. It can also help to improve your sex life.

What causes a weak pelvic floor?

There are many causes of a weak pelvic floor including:

- Constipation & continual straining to have open bowels
- Chronic cough
- Repeated heavy lifting
- Being overweight
- Poor fitness
- Prostate surgery
- Neurological damage, such as if you have a stroke, spinal injury or suffer from Multiple Sclerosis.

Consequently, some people experience leakage of urine during activities such as coughing, sneezing, laughing, lifting and exercises. This is described as stress urinary incontinence.

Others experience sudden urges to pass urine and may leak urine before they get to the toilet. This is described as urge incontinence. Exercising the pelvic floor muscle is helpful in both of these conditions.

How do I know which muscle to exercise?

If you don't know where your pelvic floor is, you can find it by imagining you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind and at the same time stopping your flow

of urine. You can feel the correct muscles by placing your finger tips against the skin just behind the scrotum. When the pelvic floor muscles tighten you will be able to feel the muscles lift away from your fingers. Your scrotum should also lift slightly and the base of your penis should move towards your abdomen.

How do I exercise the muscles?

You must do fast and slow exercises to make your pelvic floor muscles stronger. It is important to learn to do the exercises in the right way and to check from time to time that you are still doing them correctly.

Slow exercises

You should sit comfortably with the muscles of your thighs, buttocks and abdomen relaxed and your knees slightly apart. Squeeze as if you are trying to stop passing wind and at the same time you are trying to stop passing urine. The muscles should feel as though they 'lift and squeeze'. Do not use your tummy muscles or your bottom when you are doing these exercises, they should not move at all.

Hold for as long as you can - up to 10 seconds. You may not be able to hold it for more than two or three seconds at first. Repeat this up to 10 times, but have a rest in between each one for three to four seconds.

Fast exercises

It is also important to work the pelvic floor muscles to react quickly to stop you leaking when you cough or sneeze. Therefore, practise tightening your pelvic floor quickly then relax.

Fast exercises are done in the same way as slow exercises but, when you squeeze the muscles, let go immediately so that you only feel a quick lift in your pelvic floor. Repeat these exercises as many times as possible, up to 10 times.

If you are unable to feel a definite squeeze and lift, you should seek further advice from the Continence Advisory Service or your GP, as there are other treatments that you may benefit from.

When should I do them?

Once you have mastered the technique, you can do them in any position, at all times of day. You may find it easier to link it to a particular activity e.g. washing your hands.

Aim to do the fast and slow exercises at least three times per day. Your muscles will improve in strength with time and exercise.

You will need to do the exercises regularly, (ideally every day) for three months, before you will see any changes.

Once you begin to see an improvement, the exercises need to be continued to see further results and to maintain the improvement achieved so far.