

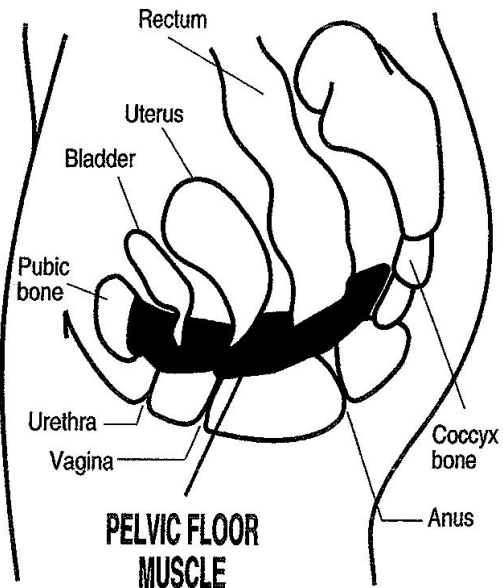
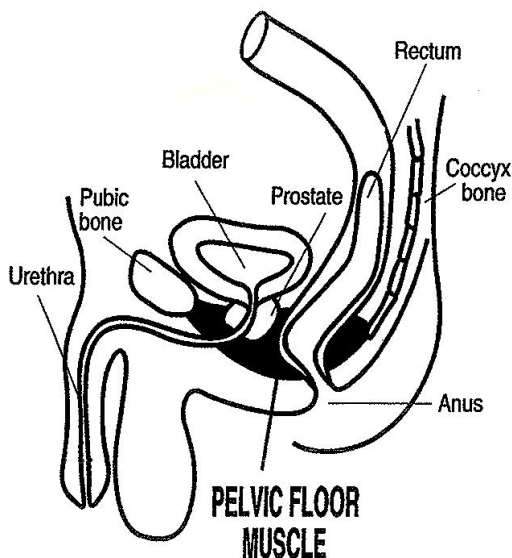
## How to Do Pelvic Muscle Exercises

### What is the Pelvic Muscle?

Your pelvic muscle provides support to your bladder, and rectum and, in women, the vagina and the uterus. If it weakens, it cannot support these organs and their position can change. This change in position can cause problems with normal function. Keeping the muscle strong can help prevent unwanted urine leakage.

### Finding the Pelvic Muscle

Without tensing the muscles of your leg, buttocks or abdomen, imagine that you are trying to control the passing of gas or pinching off a stool. Or imagine you are in an elevator full of people and you feel the urge to pass gas. What do you do? You tighten or pull in the ring of muscle around your rectum, your pelvic muscle. You should feel a lifting sensation in the area around the vagina or a pulling in of your rectum.



### Exercise Regimen

One exercise (Kegels) consists of both “tightening and relaxing” the muscle. It is equally important to control when your muscle tightens and relaxes. Be sure to relax completely between each muscle tightening.

### Types of Exercise

There are 2 types of muscle contractions you will need to practice:

#### Short/Quick Contractions (2 seconds)

To do the short/quick contractions, contract or tighten your pelvic muscle quickly and hard, and immediately relax it.

#### Long/Slow Contractions (3 or 5 or 10 seconds)

For the slow or long (sustained) contractions, contract or tighten your pelvic muscle and hold for a count of (3 or 5 or 10 as prescribed) seconds, then relax the muscle completely for the same amount of time.

## **Where to Practice**

These exercises can be practiced anywhere and anytime. You can do the exercises in these positions:

**Lying Down** – Lie on your back, flat or with your head on a pillow, knees bent and feet slightly apart. It is helpful to support your knees with a pillow.

**Sitting** – Sit upright in a firm seat and straight-back chair, knees slightly apart, feet flat on the floor or legs stretched out in front and crossed at the ankles.

**Standing** – Stand by a chair, knees slightly bent with feet shoulder width apart and toes slightly pointed outward. You can also lean on the kitchen counter with your hips flexed.

## **Times to Use the Muscle**

If you experience urine loss in one specific position only, like when you stand, then follow these steps:

- Increase the number of exercises for that position only, or
- Add additional exercises per day with focus on doing all the exercises in that position only.

## **Common Mistakes**

- Concentrate and tighten only the pelvic floor muscle. DO NOT tighten thighs, buttocks or stomach. If you feel your stomach move, then you are also using these muscles.
- DO NOT hold your breath. Breathe normally and/or count out loud.

## **Can They Be Harmful?**

No, these exercises cannot harm you in any way. You should find them easy and relaxing. If you get back or stomach pain after you exercise, you are probably trying too hard and using your stomach muscles. If you experience headaches, then you are also tensing your chest muscles and probably holding your breath.

## **When Will I See A Change?**

After 4 to 6 weeks of daily exercise, you will begin to notice less urine leakage. Make the exercises part of your daily lifestyle. Tighten the muscle when you walk, as you stand up, and on the way to the bathroom.