

Physiotherapy: Pelvic Floor Exercises

**Physiotherapy
Community & Therapy Services**

**This leaflet has been designed
explain the benefits of the
treatment activity you have been
taught, act as a reminder of
technique and who to contact with
any questions.**



Information for patients and visitors

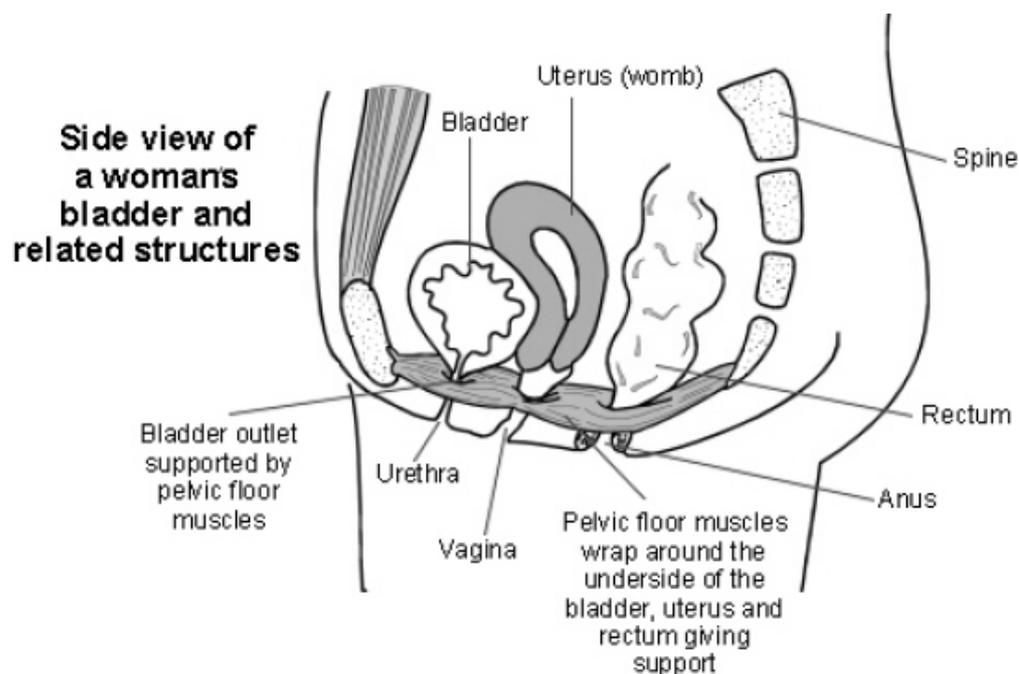
Introduction

Physiotherapists, doctors and nurses know that pelvic floor exercises can help you to improve your bladder control. When done correctly, pelvic floor exercises can build up and strengthen the muscles to help you hold urine.

Pelvic Floor Exercises

What is the Pelvic Floor?

Layers of muscle stretch like a hammock from the pubic bone in front to the bottom of the backbone (see diagram). These firm supportive muscles are called the pelvic floor. They help to hold the bladder, womb and bowel in place, and to close the bladder outlet and back passage.



Side view of a woman's pelvic organs and pelvic floor muscles.

Diagram copy EMIS and PIP 2006, as distributed on www.patient.co.uk

Information for patients and visitors

How does the pelvic floor work?

The muscles of the pelvic floor are kept firm and slightly tense to stop leakage of urine from the bladder or faeces from the bowel. When you pass water or have a bowel motion the pelvic floor muscles relax. Afterwards, they tighten again to restore control. Pelvic floor muscles can become weak and sag because of childbirth, lack of exercise, the menopause and ageing. Weak muscles give you less control, and you may leak urine, especially with exercises or when you cough, sneeze or laugh. Your pelvic floor muscles will also support your bladder, womb and bowel. Therefore a weak pelvic floor can cause a prolapse of either or all of these organs.

How can pelvic floor exercises help?

Pelvic floor exercises can strengthen these muscles so that they once again give support. This will improve your bladder control and improve or stop leakage of urine. Like any other muscles in the body, the more you use and exercise them, the stronger the pelvic floor muscles will be.

Learning to do Pelvic Floor Exercises

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:

1. Sit or lay down in a comfortable position. Now imagine that you are trying to stop yourself passing wind from the bowel. To do this you must squeeze the muscle around your back passage. Try squeezing and lifting that muscle as if you really do have wind. You should be able to feel the muscle move. You should be aware of the skin tightening and being pulled up and away from your chair. Really try to feel this
2. Now imagine that you are sitting on the toilet passing urine. Picture yourself really trying to stop the stream of urine. Really try to stop it. Try doing that now as you are reading this. You should be using the same group of muscles that you used before, but don't be surprised if you find this harder than exercise 1
3. Next time you go to the toilet to pass urine, try the "stop test" about half way through emptying your bladder. Once you have stopped or slowed down the flow of urine, relax and allow the bladder to empty completely. If the stream speeds up, then you are squeezing the wrong muscles

Do not get into the habit of doing the "stop test" every time you pass urine. This exercise should be done as a test only and maximum once a month.

Be careful not to squeeze your buttocks, legs or bring your stomach in and hold your breath, as this is not working the pelvic floor!

Information for patients and visitors

Practicing Your Exercises

- Slowly tighten and pull up the pelvic floor muscles as hard as you can. Hold and tighten for **5** seconds if you can, then relax. Repeat this at least **5** times (Slow pull ups)
- Now pull the muscles up quickly and tightly, and then relax immediately. Repeat this at least **5** times (Fast pull ups)
- Do these exercises- **5** slow and **5** fast, at least **5** times a day
- Your physiotherapist will explain how to progress these exercises
- It takes time for exercise to make muscles stronger. You are unlikely to notice improvement for several weeks – so stick at it! You will need to exercise regularly for several months before the muscles gain their full strength

Tips to Help You

1. Get into the habit of doing your exercises with things you do regularly e.g. morning and evening in bed, after each meal time, when the adverts are on TV, or at a red traffic light
2. If you are unsure that you are doing the exercises correctly, put one or two fingers in the vagina and try the exercises to check. You should feel a gentle squeeze if you are exercising the pelvic floor
3. Use the pelvic floor when you are afraid you might leak- pull up the muscles before you sneeze or lift something heavy. This is called “The knack”. Your control will gradually improve
4. Drink normally- at least 6-8 cups every day
5. Avoid the habit of going to the toilet “just in case”. Go only when you feel the bladder is full
6. Watch your weight- extra weight puts extra strain on your pelvic floor muscles
7. Once you have regained control of your bladder, don't forget the pelvic floor. Continue to do your pelvic floor exercises a few times each day to ensure that the problem does not come back

You can do your pelvic floor exercises wherever you are- nobody need know what you are doing!

Information for patients and visitors

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service offers confidential advice, support and information on any health related matters.

If you have a comment, concern, complaint or compliment about the care or service you have received from the Trust you can contact the PALS team as follows:

Telephone: 03033 306518

Email: nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

There are also offices at both the Diana Princess of Wales Hospital (near the main entrance) and Scunthorpe General Hospital (on the C Floor, near the outpatient department), should you wish to visit.

Please note: PALS should not be contacted for clinical advice relating to the content of this leaflet. The service should be contacted directly in the first instance.

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

**Diana Princess of Wales Hospital
Scartho Road
Grimsby
DN33 2BA**

**Scunthorpe General Hospital
Cliff Gardens
Scunthorpe
DN15 7BH**

**Goole & District Hospital
Woodland Avenue
Goole
DN14 6RX**

03033 306999

www.nlg.nhs.uk

Date of Issue: May, 2018

Review Period: May, 2021

Author: Women's Health Physiotherapy

IFP-1024

© NLGFT 2018

