

Pelvic Floor and Abdominal Exercises for Women



Pelvic Floor Muscles

Where are they?

They are located underneath your bladder, bowel and womb. They are attached like a hammock between the pelvic bones.

What do they do?

Strong healthy pelvic floor muscles can help:

- prevent leakage from your bladder and bowel
- safeguard against prolapse

Pelvic floor exercise

Lie, sit or stand with your knees slightly apart. Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind and at the same time try to stop your flow of urine. The feeling is one of “squeeze and lift”, closing and drawing-up at the back and front passages. This is called a pelvic floor contraction.

Do not:

- hold your breath
- squeeze legs together
- tighten buttock muscles

For comfort tighten pelvic floor muscles before coughing, sneezing or moving.

Design your own Pelvic Floor Exercise Programme

Gradually build up

- strength
- endurance
- co-ordination

First, find your 'starting block'

Tighten your pelvic floor muscles as previously described and hold for as many seconds as you can (maximum of 10 seconds).

How many seconds can you hold this contraction?

Release the contraction and rest for four seconds, then repeat as many times as you can (maximum of 10).

How many times can you repeat this?

Now perform the basic pelvic floor exercise but squeeze and lift quickly and immediately let go. This is called a fast contraction and will help your muscles react quickly when you laugh, cough, sneeze, exercise or lift.

How many quick contractions can you do? (maximum of 10)

This becomes your 'starting block'.

Next

- Repeat 'starting block' four to six times each day.
- 'Starting block' will gradually change; hold time and repetitions will increase.
- Continue to include pelvic floor exercises as part of daily routine, for life.

Problems

Speak to your G.P., physiotherapist or nurse if you are worried.

Abdominal Muscles

Why Exercise?

- These muscles are stretched by pregnancy and affected by surgery
- They help to support and protect your back
- They help to improve your figure

Deep abdominal exercise - Lie on your side with both knees bent

- 1 Place your hand on your lower abdomen between your tummy button and pubic bone - breathe normally and let your tummy sag!
- 2 Breathe in gently to prepare. As you breathe out draw in the lower part of your tummy towards your back, then relax.
- 3 Repeat but keep your muscles drawn in while you continue to breathe. Aim to hold for a count of 6 seconds. Feel your lower tummy pulling in under your hand.

Progress

Try this exercise when sitting and standing. Gradually increase the length of time holding in, and the number of repetitions (10 seconds, 10 times).
Hold your lower tummy in when walking, standing and lifting.

What next? Pelvic tilt

Once you can manage the deep abdominal exercise, you can move on to this exercise.

- 1 Lie on your back with your knees bent. Place your hand on your lower abdomen.
- 2 Tighten deep abdominal muscles as in the previous exercise.
- 3 Keep pulling in your deep abdominal muscles, tilting your pubic bone towards your chest and flattening the small of your back into the bed. Hold for 6 seconds then slowly release.

Keep breathing normally throughout.

Note

- If abdomen bulges out under your hand do not continue. Do deep abdominal exercises only for a few more days, then try again.
- Try other positions; sitting, standing or lying on side.
- May help to ease backache, afterpains and wind.
- Gradually increase the number of repetitions (10 times).

Do not try any exercises such as sit ups or lifting both legs up while lying on your back.

Notes

This booklet has been adapted from a booklet produced collaboratively by the Physiotherapy Departments at PRM, QEUH, RAH and IRH.