

Pelvic floor exercises

THE DOS AND DON'TS



About the pelvic floor muscles

Shaped like a hammock, the pelvic floor muscles are a set of muscles that sit between the pubic bone and the tail bone at the base of your pelvis.

These muscles support organs within our body, such as the bladder, bowel, vagina, and anus. When strong and functioning properly, the pelvic floor muscles prevent incontinence, such as the involuntary loss of urine or faeces. When these muscles are relaxed, urine and faeces can be released from the body. The Pelvic floor muscles also play an important part in the body's sexual function and assist during the birthing process.

After pregnancy and childbirth, the pelvic floor muscles can become weak and lead to incontinence and **prolapse** (this is when your pelvic organs sag down into the vagina). Therefore, to keep these muscles tight and in shape, there are a few exercises you can do.

How to exercise your pelvic floor muscles

Also known as 'Kegel' exercises, you can do these in the comfort of your home. So, let's take a quick look at how you can start exercising your pelvic floor muscles.

Pelvic floor/Kegel exercise for women

- Squeeze and draw in the muscles around your vagina and anus at the same time. A simple way to do this is to imagine you are trying to hold on from passing urine.
- As you squeeze, you should feel your pelvic muscles lift inside you.
- Hold on for up to 8 seconds.
- Then relax your muscles. As you relax, you will feel a sense of letting go.
- Repeat this motion up to 10 times. If possible, do three sets.
- Ensure you relax between each squeeze.

Like any exercise, consistency is key. Therefore, it is recommended that women do pelvic floor exercises every day.

The dos and don'ts of pelvic floor exercises

Do not:

- Hold your breath when doing the pelvic floor exercises.
- Continue to do the exercises if you experience pain.
- Do pelvic floor exercises when passing urine.
- Carry out persistent heavy lifting.

Do:

- Relax your pelvic muscles fully between each contraction.
- Try to vary the squeezes by doing some long and some short squeezes.
- Try to do the exercises in different positions, such as while standing, sitting or on your hands and knees.

When to seek medical help

You should consider seeking professional help if you experience symptoms such as

- Having the urge to frequently or desperately pass urine or bowel motions.
- Experience ongoing involuntary leakage of urine, bowel motions, or wind.
- Find it difficult to empty your bowel and/or your bladder.
- Experience pain during intercourse or your pelvic floor exercises.

There may be other reasons for which you may need to seek medical advice, such as prolapse or surgery to repair/strengthen torn or stretched tissue as a result of **vaginal birth**.

Whatever your circumstances, **Dr Kothari** will guide you through the most suitable treatment option for you.

Give our team a call on 02 4225 1999, if you have questions or to book an appointment.

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