



Pelvic Floor Exercises

What is the Pelvic Floor?

The pelvic floor forms the base of your deep core muscles and acts as a sling to support your internal organs. It works with your abdominal muscles, your back muscle and your diaphragm to support your spine and to control the pressure inside your abdomen. It also plays an important role in supporting the pelvic organs, bladder and bowel control and sexual function, in both men and women.

Why train the pelvic floor muscles?

- Pelvic floor muscles can weaken due the following:
- Childbirth – up to half of women who have had children will have a prolapse
- Heavy lifting
- Constipation
- Being overweight
- Persistent cough as with asthma or smokers cough

Conditions that can be helped by pelvic floor exercises:

- Stress incontinence – women who cough, sneeze, laugh or are physically active and pass an amount of urine during these activities
- Urge incontinence – women who all of a sudden have an urgency to use the bathroom
- Pelvic Organ Prolapse – see our resource on Pelvic Organ Prolapse
- Pregnant ladies to support the weight of their growing babies and to reduce risk of pelvic organ prolapse
- Menopause – with menopause hormones change and can affect bladder control
- Back pain – due to the supportive role the pelvic floor contributes to supporting the spine

How do I find my pelvic floor?

- Sit or lay down with your buttocks, thighs and abdomen relaxed. Some people find lying on their back with knees bent helps to relax these muscles.

- Think about drawing up the vagina. It might help to think about stopping the flow of urine or sucking a tampon up.
- Be sure not to squeeze the buttocks, thighs or abdomen or hold your breath
- If you are unsure whether you have found it, book in with a physiotherapist with a special interest in women's health

How often should I do it?

You should aim for a 10 second contraction while breathing. Most women cannot engage the muscles let alone hold it for 10 seconds so start small and build up gradually. Start with a one second contractions for as many repetitions as you can up to 10 repetitions. Have a break and repeat this up to three times a day. Eventually you will be able to increase the length of time you can hold the contraction and may even be able to do it while standing or doing other tasks.