

CERCISES FOR MEN

What are the pelvic floor muscles

The floor of the pelvis is made up of layers of muscle and other tissue. These layers stretch like a hammock from the tail-bone at the back to the pubic bone at the front.

A man's pelvic floor supports the bladder and the bowel. The urethra (urine tube) and the rectum (back passage) pass through the pelvic floor muscles. The pelvic floor muscles play an important role in the bladder and bowel control.

Pelvic floor exercises strengthen the pelvic floor muscles and improve control of the bladder and bowel. They may also be useful within a bladder training program, aimed at improving bladder control in people who experience the urgent need to pass urine frequently (urge incontinence).

The pelvic floor muscles can be weakened by – Prostate gland surgery

- Continual straining to empty your bowels (constipation)
- Persistent heavy lifting
- A chronic cough (such as smoker's cough or chronic bronchitis and asthma)
- Being overweight
- Lack of general fitness

How to contract the pelvic floor muscles

The first thing to do is to correctly identify the muscles that need to be exercised.

1. Sit, or lie comfortably, with the muscles of your thighs, buttocks and abdomen relaxed
2. Tighten the ring of muscle around the back passage (anus) as if you are trying to control diarrhea or wind. Relax it. Practice this movement several times until you are sure you are exercising the correct muscle. Try not to squeeze your buttocks.

3. When you are passing urine, try to stop the flow mid-stream, then re-start it. Only do this to learn which muscles are the correct ones to use, and then do it no more than once a week to check your progress, as this may interfere with normal bladder emptying.

If you are unable to feel a definite squeeze-and-lift action of your pelvic floor muscles or are unable to even slow the stream of urine as described in Point 3, you should seek professional help to get your pelvic floor muscles working correctly.

Even men with very weak pelvic floor muscles can be taught these exercises by a physiotherapist or continence advisor with expertise in this area.

Doing pelvic floor muscle exercises

Now that you can feel the muscles working, exercise them by:

1. Tightening and drawing in strongly the muscles around the anus and the urethra all at once. Lift them UP inside. Try and hold this contraction strongly as you count to 5, then release and relax. You should have a definite feeling of letting go.
2. Repeat (squeeze and lift) and relax. It is important to rest for about 10 seconds in between each contraction. If you find it easy to hold for a count of five, try to hold for longer . up to ten seconds.
3. Repeat this as many times as you are able up to a maximum of 8-18 squeezes.
4. Now do 5-10 short, fast, but strong contractions.
5. Do this whole exercise routine at least 4-5 times every day while, sitting, standing or lying.

- Do NOT hold your breath
- Do NOT push down instead of squeezing and lifting up
- Do NOT tighten your buttocks or thighs

Do your exercises well –

The quality is important! Fewer good exercises will be more beneficial than many half-hearted ones.

Making the exercises part of your daily routine –

Once you have learnt how to do these exercises, they should be done regularly, giving each set your full attention. It might be helpful to have at least 5 regular times during the day for doing the exercises . for example, after going to the toilet, when having a drink, when lying in bed.

Other things you can do to help your pelvic floor muscles –

- Share the lifting of heavy loads.
- Avoid constipation and prevent any straining during a bowel movement.
- Seek medical advice for hay-fever, asthma and bronchitis to reduce sneezing and coughing
- Keep your weight within the right range for your height and weight.

Seek help

Good results take time!

In order to build your pelvic floor muscles to their maximum strength you will need to work hard at these exercises. The best results are achieved by seeking help from a physiotherapist or continence advisor who will design an individual exercise program especially suited to you.