



# Your guide to Pelvic Floor Exercises

For men



## Introduction

Pelvic floor exercises are recommended as a way of improving bladder control. When done correctly, the exercises outlined in this guide can strengthen your pelvic floor muscles, which in turn can have a positive impact on your bladder and bowel control.

### What is the Pelvic Floor?

The pelvic floor consists of layers of muscle and ligaments that stretch from the tailbone at the back to the pubic bone in front. The urethra and rectum pass through the pelvic floor. Firm, supportive pelvic floor muscles help support bladder and bowel control, and also plays a role in maintaining an erection.

#### Quick tip

Keep your weight within the right range for your height and age



## How to contract the Pelvic Floor Muscles

Finding your pelvic floor muscles can be a bit challenging. The first thing to do is correctly identify the muscles that need to be exercised. Here's what you need to do:

Sit comfortably with your knees slightly apart, or lie down. Make sure the muscles of your thighs, buttocks and abdomen are relaxed.

Next, tighten the ring of muscle around the back passage as if trying to control diarrhoea or wind. You should be able to feel the muscle move, but you shouldn't feel any squeezing in your buttocks, thighs or tummy muscles.

Now, try and imagine that you are drawing your penis inside your body to shorten it, while at the same time lifting your scrotum upwards towards your belly button. If your technique is correct, you should feel a dip at the base of your penis, and feel your scrotum move up slightly each time you tighten your pelvic floor muscles.

If you struggle to feel a definite squeeze and lift action of your pelvic floor muscles when exercising, you should seek further help from a physiotherapist or continence advisor. This is a sign of very weak pelvic floor muscles, however you can still be taught these exercises with a bit of extra help from a professional.

#### Quick tip

Try and avoid lifting heavy loads as this could weaken your pelvic floor muscles. If your job involves heavy lifting, try and get another person to share the lifting with you so that your muscles aren't under as much pressure.

## Practising your exercises

Now that you can find your pelvic floor muscles, it's time to put your effort into practise. We've listed 2 types of exercises below - slow contractions (Set one) and quick contractions (Set two).

We recommend you do a set of slow contractions followed by a set of quick contractions at least 3 times a day.

### Set one - slow contractions

The aim of this exercise is to give your pelvic floor muscles stamina. Either sit, stand or lie with your knees slightly apart. Gradually tighten and pull in the pelvic floor muscles, shortening and lifting them for as long as you can. Rest for 4 seconds and then repeat. Build up your strength until you can do 10 slow contractions at a time, with a 10 second hold for each and 4 seconds of rest in between.

### Set two - quick contractions

This exercise aims to help your pelvic floor muscles react quickly to sudden stresses such as sneezing, coughing or laughing, that put pressure on the bladder. Assume the same position as slow contractions, but after drawing in the pelvic floor, hold it for just a few seconds before relaxing. Quick contractions help achieve strong muscle tightening, so aim to build up to 10 quick contractions in succession.

Remember, it takes time to notice a difference in your pelvic muscle strength, so don't give up if you're not seeing instant results! You'll likely need to exercise regularly for at least 3 months before your muscles gain their full strength. Everyone is different too, so keep at it, and you will see results in time.

### Quick tip

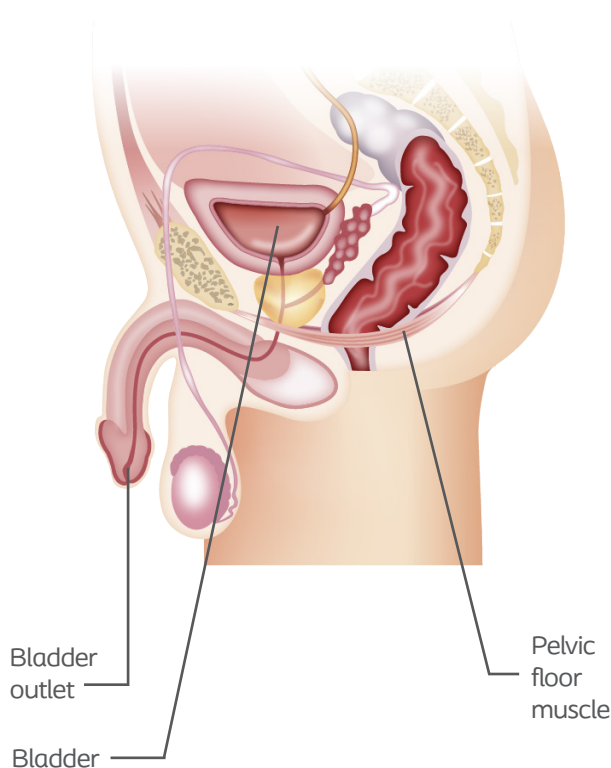
Seek medical advice for hay fever, asthma and bronchitis to reduce sneezing and coughing.

## Why Pelvic Floor muscles weaken

A number of factors can weaken pelvic floor muscles. Some common examples are:

- Surgery for an enlarged prostate gland
- Continual straining to empty the bowels, usually due to constipation
- Persistent heavy lifting
- A chronic cough, such as chronic bronchitis, asthma or a smoker's cough
- Being overweight or obese
- Lack of general fitness

Neurological damage (e.g. as a result of neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis, or after a stroke or spinal injury) can result in poor pelvic floor muscle function. If this applies to you, you should seek advice from a healthcare professional before exercising.



## Making the exercises part of your daily routine

Once you've mastered the exercises, you should do them regularly to get the full benefit, taking care to maintain proper technique. Some people find that timing their exercises with other day-to-day activities helps them fit them into their routine, such as when going to the toilet, having a drink, waiting for a kettle to boil or before going to sleep.

You should also get into the habit of tightening your pelvic floor muscles while you're getting up from a chair, coughing or lifting. This could help you control situations like this that you know could result in leaks.

Eventually, you'll strengthen your pelvic floor muscles to the point where you regain control of your bladder and bowel. It will take time, but you will see results if you keep doing the exercises. Once you've regained control, we would recommend that you continue to do the exercises twice a day to ensure the issue doesn't return.

## If you have any questions...

This leaflet is designed to get you on the road to controlling your bladder, but if you're having trouble with the exercises or would like any further advice, don't hesitate to get in touch with your doctor or continence advisor.