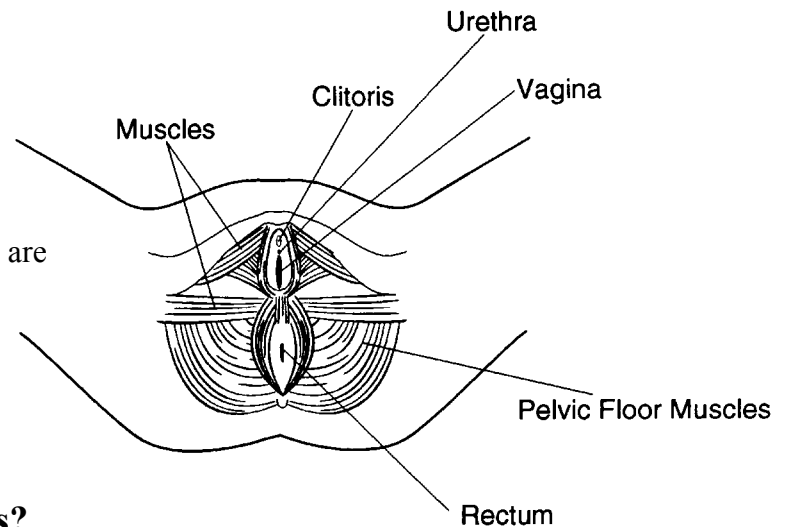


Kegel or Pelvic Floor Exercises for Women

Kegel or pelvic floor muscles exercises help strengthen weak muscles around the bladder. When these muscles are weak, you can leak urine.

What is the Pelvic Floor?

The pelvic floor is made up of muscles that support the internal abdominal and pelvic organs. These muscles run in different directions and are different sizes. One job of these muscles is to support, lift and control muscles that close the tube that urine passes through (urethra).



How do I find the right muscles?

- To make sure that you are exercising the right muscles, try starting and stopping your urine stream. This should be done only to locate the correct muscles, and then once a week to check that you are continuing to use these muscles.
- Do not tighten your buttock or thigh muscles when doing these exercises. Relax your stomach muscles as much as possible. Pelvic floor muscles are exercised by squeezing and relaxing them. This takes effort and practice.
- To check that you are doing the exercise right, insert one finger into the vagina and squeeze the muscle. If you are doing the exercise the right way, you should feel the muscle tighten around your finger.

How do I do the exercises?

- Begin by squeezing the muscles for a count of 4, then relax for a count of 4. At first, you may be able to squeeze the muscles for only 1 - 2 seconds. As the muscles get stronger, you will be able to hold for the count of 4.
- Slowly work up to squeezing and relaxing the muscles until you can do them for a count of 4 for 5 minutes twice a day.
- When squeezing to a count of 4 becomes easy, you can increase the squeezing to a count of 8. Then relax for a count of 8. Do this for 5 minutes twice a day. Remember to relax between each squeeze. Let the muscle go loose and do not push down.

When should I do these exercises?

When you first start doing the exercises, set aside time when you can do them without being interrupted. After you have done them for a while, you can practice these exercise anytime and anywhere.

Always squeeze your pelvic floor muscles when you:

- Sit up from lying down
- Stand from a sitting position
- Lift something heavy

You can practice squeezing these muscles when you are watching T.V., standing in line, or driving your car. Since these exercises are being done within your body, people will not know you are doing them. These exercises need to be done regularly for any results. It usually takes 6 - 12 weeks to see results.

Are there any precautions?

- Some people exercise more than they should, hoping that they will regain bladder control quicker. If you exercise too much, too soon, your bladder control may get worse. Start slowly and increase the amount of exercise slowly. Follow the guidelines that your health care providers have given you.
- Be sure to breathe during the exercises. Holding your breath may put extra pressure on your pelvic muscles.

If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

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