

Pelvic Floor Exercises

Try to get started with your pelvic floor exercises sooner rather than later. Once you are home from hospital, start doing the exercises three times a day. Start gently and gradually build up your exercises as you recover. Do not be surprised if your muscles feel very weak to begin with. The area may feel heavy and swollen and getting the muscles going may feel like a real effort. This will improve with time.

What are Pelvic Floor Muscles?

The pelvic floor muscles are at the bottom of your pelvis and are important for:

- stabilising the pelvis and spine
- supporting your pelvic organs
- supporting of your growing baby

How Do I Exercise Them?

To exercise these muscles, imagine that you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind at the same time as trying to stop passing urine. You should feel a squeeze and a lift inside the vagina. Do not hold your breath. Do not clench your buttocks.

If you find this difficult or feel a vaginal bulging when you try to tighten your pelvic floor muscles - get help from a specialist physiotherapist.

Pelvic floor muscle exercises should include long squeezes as well as short, quick squeezes.

Long Squeezes

- Tighten your pelvic floor, hold, and then relax fully. How long can you hold the squeeze?
- Repeat until the muscles tire. How many times can you repeat the squeezes?

Short Squeezes

- Quickly tighten your pelvic floor muscles, then immediately let them go again. How many times can you do this quick squeeze before the muscles tire?
- You may need to start with 'little and often' if you find that you can only hold the squeeze for a short time, or only do a few before the muscles tire
- You should do your pelvic floor muscle exercises at least 3 times a day.
- Build up your exercise routine gradually over the weeks and months. If your muscles were weak, you should notice an improvement in 3-5 months.
- Eventually, aim to do 10 long squeezes, holding each for 10 seconds, followed by 10 short squeezes.

If you have faecal urgency and are finding it difficult to get to the toilet in time then squeeze these muscles while getting to the toilet. A gentle squeeze works better than a strong squeeze as a powerful squeeze loses energy quickly and this sudden relaxation in power is often when people experience faecal leakage on the way to the toilet.

Additional Support

Many women find it difficult to remember to do their pelvic floor exercises. Downloading an app (e.g. Squeezy) can help to remind you.

