

Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises (Kegel Exercises)

Information for Patients

The muscles of the pelvic floor are responsible for supporting the structures within the pelvis and abdomen. They help maintain control of bladder and bowel function. They can be weakened by age, neurological problems, childbirth and surgery. Like other muscles, they can be made stronger with exercise such that bowel function and urinary incontinence can be improved.

Uses of pelvic floor muscle exercises:

1. Help improve or maintain control of bladder and bowel function.
2. Improve or maintain strength and tone of pelvic floor muscles that support pelvic organs against gravity.
3. Help recover urinary control in men after prostate cancer surgery.



STEP 1: FIND THE RIGHT MUSCLES

Make sure you are exercising the right thing.

- Squeeze the same muscles you would use to cut off your urinary stream or prevent passing gas.
- Women can try to squeeze 1-2 fingers placed in the vagina with the surrounding muscles.
- If you are doing it correctly you will feel your genitals "drawing up and in".



STEP 2: PERFECT YOUR TECHNIQUE & REPEAT USING THE "10-10-10-3-3-3" PROGRAM

Building strength takes time – be patient and control will improve.

10 SETS of contractions	10 SECONDS holding*	10 SECONDS relaxing*
3 REPEATS of each set	3 TIMES per day for	3 MONTHS minimum

- Tighten only pelvic floor muscles. Do not use abdominal, buttock or inner thigh muscles.
- Breathe during exercises.
- Choose a comfortable place and quiet time of day to perform these eg. in bed, watching TV
- * you may only be able hold for a 2-3 seconds when you start – work your way up



COMMON PITFALLS

Like any exercise, results won't occur immediately

- Don't perform the exercises by trying to stop your stream – trying to stop the stream is only to help you identify the right muscles.
- Don't hold your breath and bear down – this uses the abdominal, buttocks and leg muscles which are *not* the ones you want. This strains the pelvic floor and pushes out and down instead of drawing up and in.
- You must be diligent and keep up with the exercises. Results take time.

If you are having problems localizing the right muscles, a physiotherapist or nurse continence advisor can help - ask us about the Richmond Urological Care Centre.