

Pelvic Floor “Kegel” Exercises



UHN

For women

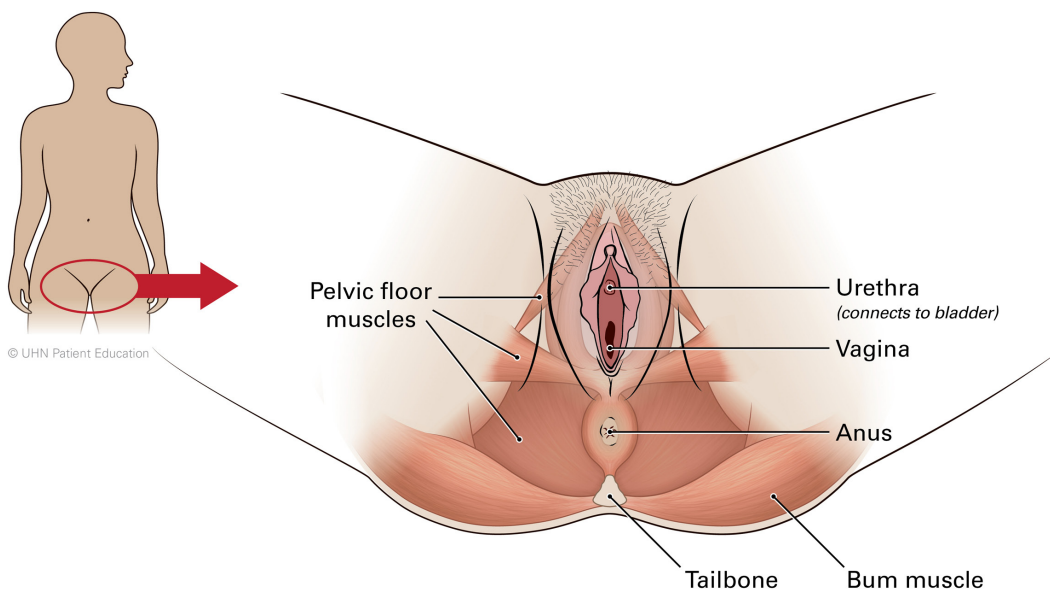
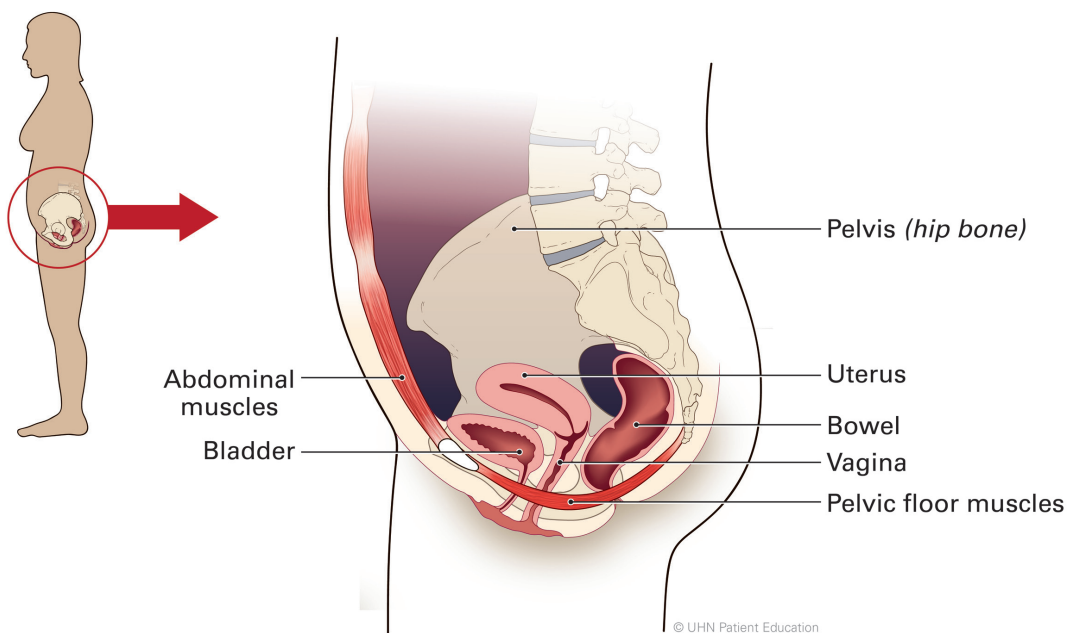
Read this resource to learn:

- About pelvic floor “Kegel” exercises
- Who should do these exercises
- How to do the exercises
- Where to find more information

About pelvic floor “Kegel” exercises

Pelvic floor exercises (also called “Kegel” exercises) are a simple way to help build strength in your pelvic floor muscles. These muscles form a bowl shape in the base of your pelvis (see pictures below).

Your pelvic floor muscles help you control the flow of urine (pee) and feces (poo). They also keep your bladder, uterus and bowels in place.



Who needs to do pelvic floor exercises?

Women with weak pelvic floor muscles should do these exercises. You will likely have weak pelvic muscles if you:

- **Leak urine or feces when you:**
 - laugh
 - run
 - cough
 - lift something
- **Have started menopause.** Menopause is the time in a women's life when her menstruation (monthly period) stops. As menopause starts, the body makes less of the hormones that keep your muscles strong.
- **Have had cancer treatments that cause early menopause.** These include:
 - Chemotherapy
 - Radiation to the pelvis
 - Surgery to remove ovaries
- **Are over the age of 40.** Even if you have not gone through menopause, you should still start the exercises. As people age, their muscles naturally get weaker.
- **Had radiation therapy treatment near your pelvis.** The treatment makes the muscles in the area tight and weak.
- **Have given birth to a child.** Carrying the weight of a baby for 9 months can cause the pelvic floor to stretch and weaken. Giving birth through the vagina can also cause the muscles to stretch, tear and become weak.

Do not do pelvic floor exercises if you:



- **Just had surgery.** Wait at least 6 to 8 weeks before you do pelvic floor exercises. Your body needs time to heal. Talk to your doctor or nurse about the right time to start these exercises.
- **Have a urinary catheter in place.** This is the tube doctors insert into your urethra to collect pee in a bag. If you do the exercise with a catheter in place, you may cause bladder spasms or bleeding. You can do the exercises safely a few days after the catheter is removed. Ask your doctor or nurse about the right time to start these exercises.
- **Feel pain during sex or medical pelvic exams.** Doing pelvic floor exercises can make this pain worse. You will need to see a pelvic health physiotherapist to help you with this pain before doing any pelvic floor exercises. See page 7 to learn about referrals and how to find a pelvic health physiotherapist near you.

How will strong pelvic floor muscles help me?

Building strong pelvic floor muscles will help you:

- **Prevent urine or feces from leaking.** You will have more control with stronger pelvic floor muscles.
- **Keep the organs above your pelvic floor in the right place.** You need strong pelvic floor muscles to hold your organs in place. Weak muscles will cause your organs to shift lower than normal.
- **Have better blood flow to your pelvic area.** This will help your vagina stay healthy.
- **Make sex feel better.** Better blood flow will help your vagina stay moist. Stronger muscles around your vagina will increase friction during sex. Both will make sex more comfortable and enjoyable.

How to do pelvic floor exercises

What do I need to do before I start the exercises?

You need to find your pelvic floor muscles before you start the exercises. There are 2 ways you can find your pelvic floor muscles.

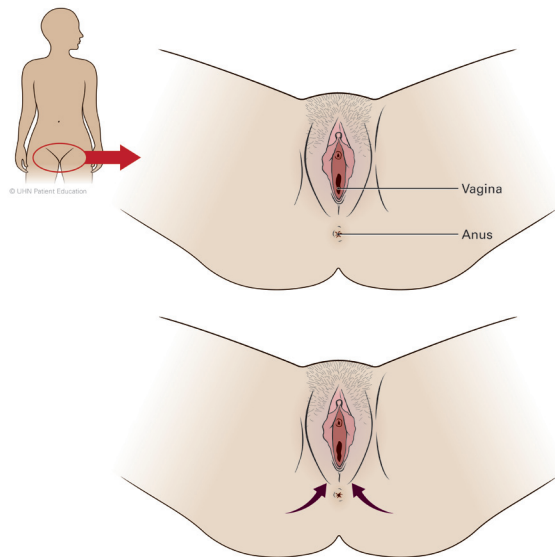
Try both options below to see which works best for you:

Option 1

1. Imagine you are sitting on the toilet.
2. Then, imagine that you are peeing.
3. Now, imagine stopping the flow of your urine midstream. The muscles you used to stop the flow of urine are the pelvic floor muscles.

Option 2

1. Use a mirror to look at the area between your vagina and anus.
2. Tighten the muscles around your anus. It should feel like you are preventing the release of gas. You should see the area between your vagina and anus lift up and in towards your body. These are your pelvic floor muscles.



How do I do pelvic floor exercises?

Follow these steps to do pelvic floor exercises:

1. Get into a comfortable position. You may find it easiest to do the exercise lying down. You can also sit or stand if you like.
2. Tighten your pelvic floor muscles. Your belly, inner thighs and bum should be relaxed.
3. Hold for 5 to 10 seconds.
4. Relax your pelvic floor muscles for 10 seconds.

Repeat this exercise 5 times.

When 5 times becomes easy to do, increase it to 10 times.

How often should I do pelvic floor exercises?

Do pelvic floor exercises 3 times every day. Try to include these exercises into your daily routine. This will help you remember to do them every day.

Try doing the exercises while you are:

- In bed when you first wake up. You can also do them just before you go to sleep.
- During a commercial break of a TV show. You can do this while still sitting on the couch.
- Waiting for something to cook in the microwave.
- Waiting in line at the grocery store.

Your muscles will get stronger as you start to exercise them more.

Where to find more information

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you:



- **Have trouble doing your pelvic floor exercises.** Your doctor, nurse or pelvic health physiotherapist can teach you how to do the exercises.
- **Notice your urine or feces is leaking.** Your doctor, nurse or pelvic health physiotherapist can help you manage this.
- **Feel a lot of pain during sex or medical pelvic exams.** Tell your doctor or nurse about this pain. You will need to see a pelvic health physiotherapist. Do not do any pelvic floor exercises, it will make the pain worse.

How do I find a pelvic health physiotherapist?

Contact the organizations below to find a pelvic health physiotherapist near you. You do not need a doctor's referral to see a pelvic health physiotherapist. But, some private health insurance companies only cover the cost if you have a doctor's referral. Check with your insurance company.

College of Physiotherapists of Ontario

375 University Avenue, Suite 901
Toronto, Ontario, M5G 2J5

Website: www.collegept.org
Email: info@collegept.org
Phone: 1-800-583-5885

Pelvic Health Solutions

Website: www.pelvichealthsolutions.ca

The development of patient education resources is supported by the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation.