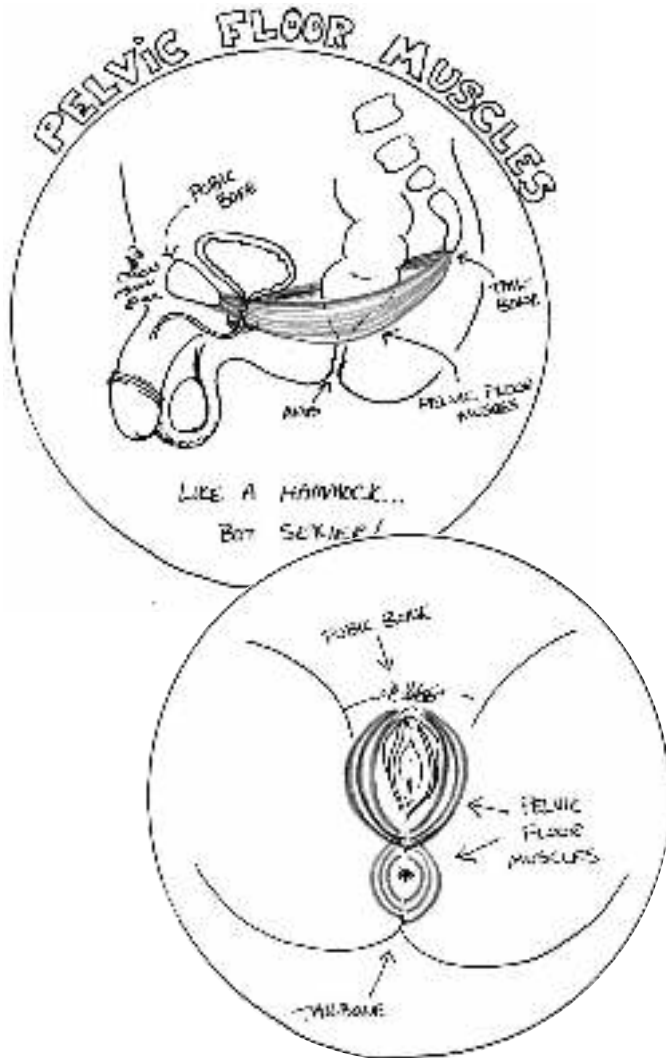


## What and where is it?

The pelvic floor is a layered hammock of muscles and connective tissue that sits within the bottom of your pelvis. The hammock attaches to the pubic bone in the front and runs as far back as the tailbone. The muscles sit very close to the skin, within the first inch or so inside your body.



These muscles contract rhythmically during orgasm, and also help us control our bladder and bowels when we sneeze, laugh or simply have to wait.

The stronger the muscles, the stronger the physical pulsing sensation during orgasm. Just like your biceps, the pelvic floor muscles can be strengthened. Also, for those who like anal play, having a good understanding of how to relax your pelvic floor helps with controlling the outer sphincter.

## How can I find it?

Strengthening these muscles requires first ensuring you are able to isolate them. There are a few ways to do this:

- Some of these muscles are what we can use to stop the flow of urine. Next time you pee, see if you can stop the flow mid-way. This is a good way to tell if you have them, though is not a great way to practice strengthening the muscles, since repeated stopping and starting can eventually become a problem for your bladder.
- To figure out how to contract the muscles near the back, visualize what it would be like if you had a tail. Now try to pull your tail between your legs.
- It's best to start practicing when you are lying down. When horizontal, the muscles do not have to work against gravity, so it's easier for them to contract. Also, the tendency is for your butt or inner thigh muscles to cheat for the pelvic floor, and when you are lying down, it is easy to check that both are relaxed.
- You can check you have the right muscles by placing your hand between your thighs and applying light pressure. When you tighten, you should feel like the tissues under the skin are moving away from your hand.
- Those of you with vaginas can put a finger or two inside to see if you feel the ring of muscle tightening around your fingers.

- Those of you with penises will be able to see or feel your cock twitch and pull in slightly.

## How can I strengthen my pelvic floor?

Exercises for the pelvic floor, often called Kegel exercises, are easy to do and do not require any special equipment. Like with all muscles, it is easier to start in a position where the muscles do not have to work against gravity. For your pelvic floor, this means you start in horizontal positions.

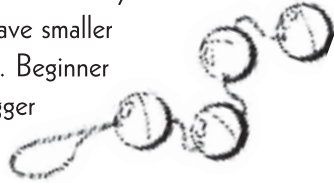
Quicker contractions will help with power, while sustained ones help with control and endurance for the pelvic floor. You can do these exercises anywhere – in the line up at the grocery store, while doing dishes, wherever!

- Quickly tighten the muscles as hard as you can, then relax. Repeat.
- Tighten the muscles fully, hold for 3-5 seconds, then relax. Rest for a few seconds, then repeat.
- Imagine an elevator ride: starting from fully relaxed, do a slight contraction to 'level one'. Hold briefly, then try to increase a bit to level two. Keep doing this for as many levels as you can. Try to be just as slow and controlled on the release.

Once you can do ten of each of these easily, try some of the challenges below. If you experience tailbone pain after doing your exercises, try fewer.

## Ways to further challenge yourself

- When you are ready for a challenge, try doing the exercises in sitting or standing.
- Since the pelvic floor is part of your 'core', when doing abdominal stability exercises (in the gym, during yoga or pilates, etc), you will get a bit of contraction here as well automatically. You can focus on this more to get a stronger contraction.
- For those of you with vaginas, you can actively push against the muscle if you put fingers or toys internally.
- For those of you with cocks, when hard you can drape a towel (and increase the weight over time) that you have to work against.
- Ben-wa balls – these come in a variety of sizes and weights, and usually have smaller weighted balls within them. Beginner ben-wa balls should be bigger and lighter.
- You can use them when lying down, pulling on the string to increase the resistance.
- In standing, walking or running, the extra weight alone adds a challenge. The smaller the balls, the harder the muscle has to contract to hold them in.



## Have pain or weakness?

Some physiotherapists are specially trained to help people who experience pain with pelvic floor contraction or weakness (which can lead to bladder and bowel control problems). For more information or to find one in your community, contact the college of physiotherapy/physical therapy in your province.

Venus Envy is an education oriented sex shop and bookstore with stores in Ottawa and Halifax. Our goal is to provide everyone with a respectful (and fun!) place where they can find toys and tools to explore gender and sexuality.

We believe that one of the best tools to enjoying a healthy and satisfying sex life is knowledge. To that end, we offer our pamphlets series as a way for people to access information even if you're too shy to ask one of us at the shop! You are welcome to download and print any of these pamphlets to share with lovers, friends, clients, or anyone else!


Our goal is to make sex positive and accurate information available to everybody. Our pamphlets offer an introduction to many facets of sex and sexual health and are always evolving. We recognize that language can be limiting and that people have a variety of ways of describing their bits. We've chosen to use medical terms for clarity, but understand that these terms don't work for everyone. We welcome any comments and suggestions that you may have.

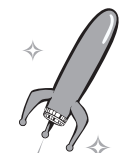
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