

The pelvic floor muscles are the layer of muscles that support the pelvic organs; the bladder and bowel in men and the bladder, bowel and uterus in women. (See diagram opposite showing the pelvic organs and the pelvic floor muscles).

The pelvic floor muscles stretch from your tailbone (coccyx) to your pubic bone front to back, and from side to side.

What do my pelvic floor muscles do?

They provide support to the pelvic organs. When you contract your pelvic floor muscles the internal organs are lifted, and the sphincters tighten the openings of the vagina, anus and urethra. When you relax the muscles the pelvic floor the passage of urine and faeces is enabled.

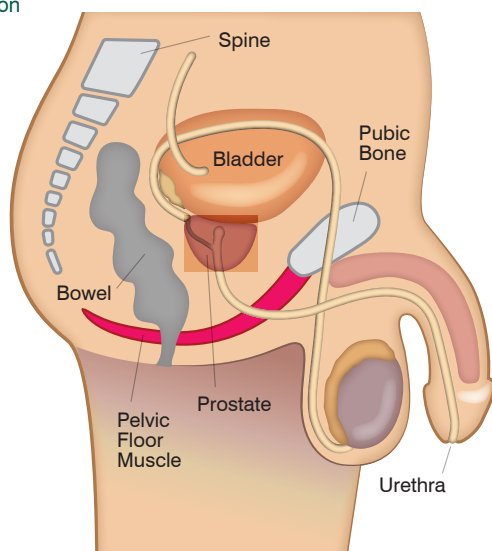
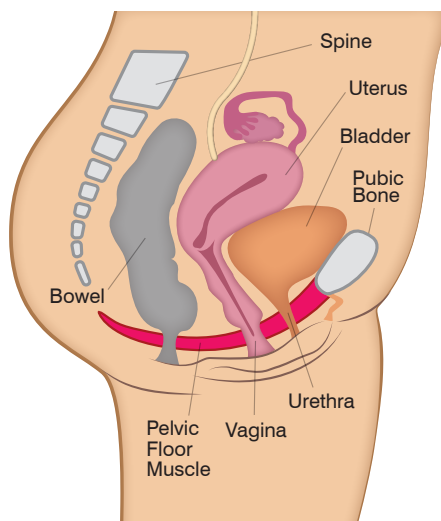
Your pelvic floor muscles are also important in sexual function for both men and women.

They are important for erectile function and ejaculation in men and in women the voluntary contraction (squeezing) of the pelvic floor contribute to sexual sensation and arousal.

The pelvic floor muscles in women also provide support for a baby during pregnancy and assist in the birthing process.

What can cause the pelvic floor muscles to weaken?

- Pregnancy and childbirth
- Straining on the toilet/Constipation
- Chronic cough
- Heavy lifting
- High impact exercise
- Nerve damage post-surgery
- Age
- Obesity



How will I know if my pelvic floor muscles are weak?

- You may accidentally leak urine when you exercise, laugh, cough or sneeze
- You may need to get to the toilet in a hurry or not make it there in time
- You may experience difficulty emptying your bladder or bowel
- Accidental loss of bladder/bowel control
- Accidental passing of wind
- You may notice a prolapse
- You may experience pain/discomfort in the pelvic area

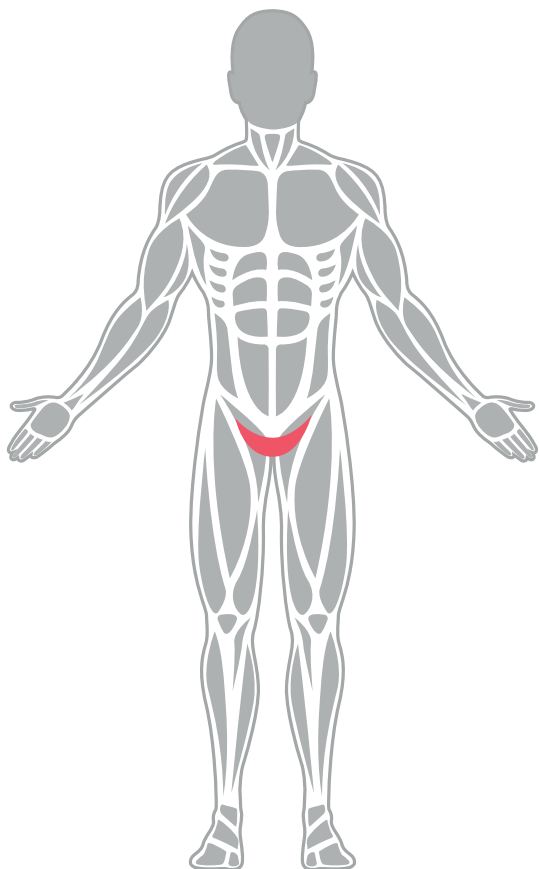
Identify the correct muscles

It is very important if you are going to do your pelvic floor muscle exercises that you are able to identify the correct muscles.

There are a few ways that this can be done:

- Sit or lie down with the muscles of your thighs and buttocks relaxed. It may be helpful to use a hand mirror initially to watch your pelvic floor muscles as they pull up (contract).
- Squeeze the ring of muscle around the back passage as if you are trying to stop yourself passing wind and then relax this muscle. Squeeze and let go a couple of times until you are sure you have the right muscles. Remember not to squeeze your buttocks together.
- When you visit the toilet to pass water, try to stop the stream of urine, then start it again and fully empty your bladder. This will help you identify the correct muscles, but this is NOT something you should do regularly as it may affect your bladder function.
- For men; stand in front of a mirror with no clothes on. Contract your pelvic floor muscles and if you have the correct muscles you will see your penis draw in and your scrotum lift up.

If none of the above work for you ask for help from your specialist nurse, continence advisor or physiotherapist. They will be able to offer help to get your pelvic floor muscles working.



How to perform your Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises (Sometimes referred to as Kegel exercises)

You can exercise these muscles anywhere and at any time. You can also do them lying down, sitting in a chair or standing up. Once you have mastered the technique and know you are doing them right, it really doesn't matter.

If you have recently had pelvic surgery or you know you have a long-standing weakness, you may find it easier to be sitting or lying down to start with.

- Sit or lay down in a comfortable position.
- Relax your thighs, buttocks and tummy
- Slow exercises/contractions: Squeeze and draw up the muscle around your back passage and in women, the vagina. As you tighten the muscles you should feel a 'lift' inside. Hold that muscle strong and tight and count to 10.
- After the count of 10 relax that muscle – you should experience a distinct feeling of 'letting go'.
- Now rest for a count of 10
- Repeat this slow exercise 10 times
- If you are unable to count to 10 straight away, don't worry. Try to count to 5 and then build this up over a period of time.
- Quick exercises/contractions: lift up the pelvic floor muscles and then relax immediately.
- Being able to work these muscles quickly will help you to deal with the sudden stresses of coughing or laughing
- Do 10 quick exercises steadily
- Complete 10 slow and 10 quick exercise sets 3 times a day to build up your pelvic floor muscle strength
- Remember that these exercises should be for life





Further useful advice

- *The Pelvic Floor Muscles are like any other; 'if you don't use it, you lose it'.*
- *It is better to do your exercises correctly 2-3 times a day as opposed to constant half-hearted ones – as with all muscles they can tire which could make your symptoms worse.*
- *Don't pull in your tummy when you do these exercises*
- *Don't hold your breath*
- *Don't squeeze your legs together*
- *Don't tighten your buttocks*
- *Only squeeze and lift*
- *If you see no improvement after 3-months, ask for help*

***Please don't be worried about asking for help – You are not alone
Manfred Sauer Care will support you in any way possible but
please do stay in contact with your local healthcare professional.***

Your Nurse is:

Nurse Contact Number:

If you use urology products on prescription, we can dispense them for you and deliver direct to your door free of charge. Please contact us for further information.

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Your Prescription Requirements

Manufacturer	Product	Prescription Code	Pack Size