

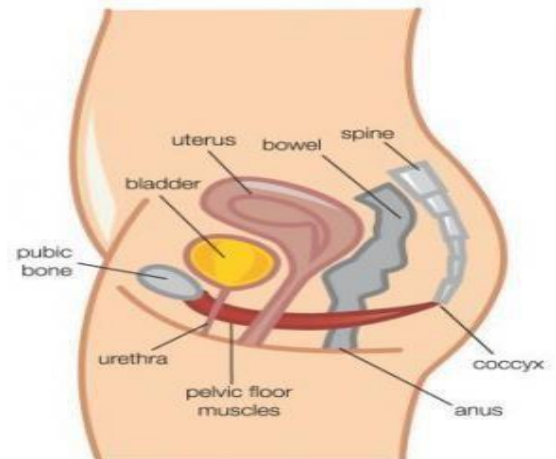
A guide to your pelvic floor exercises

Where are the pelvic floor muscles?

The pelvic floor muscles form the basin of your pelvis. They are attached between the bottom of your spine (the coccyx or tail bone) and the pubic bone at the front. They support the bladder, the womb (uterus) and the bowel.

What do they do?

- Help to control when you pass urine and empty your bowels
- Have a role to play in controlling the symptoms of some types of prolapse
- Can assist when training an overactive bladder
- These muscles should be firm and strong



If your body is different to this picture or if you have any questions, please ask our team. We are here to help and want the exercises to work in the best possible way for you and your needs.

Why do pelvic floor muscles become weak?

- Carrying extra load during pregnancy and after childbirth
- Changes due to menopause and age
- Being constipated and straining to empty your bowels for long periods
- Being overweight
- A chronic or smoker's cough
- Lack of general fitness
- Heavy and incorrect lifting



How do I do pelvic floor exercises correctly?

During your examination the nurse or physiotherapist will have checked to make sure you are able to contract your pelvic floor muscles properly. Follow these four steps;

Step 1	Choose a comfortable position, either lying or sitting. Think about relaxing and releasing first.
Step 2	Tighten up your back passage as if trying to stop passing wind.
Step 3	At the same time tighten up as if trying to stop yourself passing urine.
Step 4	Continue tightening and be aware of the feeling of lifting these muscles upwards and forwards.

Try not to clench your buttocks, squeeze your thighs together or hold your breath.

You can check yourself by trying the following; Hold a small mirror so you can see the area between your legs. Tighten your pelvic floor muscles. You should see the skin between the back passage and vagina lift and move away from the mirror.

Once you know how it feels to work these muscles, start a regular exercise programme of fast and slow exercises.

Slow exercises	Strengthen muscles to help them support bladder and bowel.
Fast exercises	Train muscles and reduce risk of urine leaks when you cough, laugh or sneeze.

Your programme

Date			
Hold time			
Repetitions			
Fast exercises			
Lower stomach hold			

Sitting	Standing	Times a day
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Top tips!

It's easy to forget to do exercises - try to tie them in with an activity you do every day. You may notice improvement within a few weeks, but it may take longer than this. Don't give up practicing your exercises!

Do not stop and start when passing urine - this can prevent your bladder emptying effectively.

Tighten your pelvic floor muscles firmly before and during an activity that may cause you to leak such as lifting, coughing or moving from sitting to standing. This technique is often called 'The Knack' and can really help you to stay dry.

Further information: Bladder and Bowel UK <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/>

