

Kegel Exercises (Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises)

The pelvic floor consists of a group of muscles that stretch like a hammock from the pubic bone to the tailbone. These muscles support and help control the function of the vagina, bladder, and rectum. Weakness of the pelvic floor muscles can lead to urinary incontinence, fecal incontinence, vaginal prolapse, and other problems. Kegel exercises are a way to strengthen and tone weak pelvic floor muscles.

To identify the pelvic floor muscles, try to stop your flow while urinating. You may not be able to stop the flow completely if these muscles are weak, but if it at least slows down, you've found the pelvic floor muscles. These are the same muscles you use to prevent passing gas. Kegel exercises should not be done during urination.

Instructions:

1. Take a deep breath and slowly exhale. Repeat this again and relax. Lightly place your hands on your abdomen, one on each side. Try to keep your abdominal muscles, leg muscles, and buttocks relaxed during Kegel exercises. Stay relaxed and don't hold your breath.
2. Picture your pelvic floor muscles encircling your vagina and rectum in a figure "8". Squeeze or contract these muscles like you did while you were stopping the flow of urine.
3. Hold the contraction for 5 seconds then relax the muscles for five seconds. It is important to relax the muscles completely to prevent muscle pain or fatigue. Gradually increase to holding the contraction for 10 seconds with a relaxation period of 10 seconds.

Do a set of 10 Kegel exercises three times per day. Incorporate them into your daily activities such as during mealtime, when watching television, or while brushing your teeth. Kegel exercises must be done correctly and consistently to be effective. Keeping your pelvic floor muscles strong is a lifelong commitment.

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