

Kegel Exercises

What are Kegel exercises?

Kegel exercises are exercises you can do to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. Kegel exercises can be helpful to both women and men. The pelvic floor muscles help support the urethra, bladder, vagina, penis, uterus, and rectum. You use them when you urinate or have bowel movements. They are also used during sex, for example, during orgasm.

Why should I do Kegel exercises?

Strengthening the pelvic floor muscles can help in a number of ways. For example, these exercises can:

- Help treat or prevent some bladder control problems, such as leaking of urine from the bladder
- Improve control over bowel movements
- Improve sexual function
- Help women who have uterine prolapse (fallen uterus) or pain during sex

If you have a bladder control problem from weakened pelvic muscles, you may have less leakage after doing Kegel exercises regularly for just a few weeks. However, you may not notice a lot of improvement until after 3 to 6 months of daily exercises. Keep doing the exercises every day to keep the pelvic muscles strong even if you do not feel a difference.

What causes weak pelvic muscles?

The muscles may be weakened by:

- Childbirth
- Aging
- Chronic coughing
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Frequent heavy lifting over time
- Injury
- Previous pelvic surgery
- Loss of the female hormone estrogen after menopause
- Prostate surgery

How do I do Kegel exercises?

You can feel the muscles that need to be exercised by squeezing the muscles in your genital area. You might find that it helps to pretend you are contracting the pelvic muscles to stop a flow of urine or to stop passing gas.

- Squeeze your pelvic muscles and hold the contraction for 3 to 5 seconds. Do this 10 to 20 times. Let the muscles relax completely between contractions.
- Do sets of 10 to 20 contractions 3 to 4 times a day. You won't get as much help from the exercises if you do them less often than this.

You can do Kegel exercises almost anywhere: while sitting at a desk, washing dishes, driving a car, waiting in line, or watching TV. No one will know you are doing them. Don't do these exercises while you are urinating or having a bowel movement.

What if I'm having trouble doing Kegels?

It may be hard for you to find the right muscles to squeeze for the Kegel exercises. If you are having trouble doing Kegels, talk to your healthcare about other ways to exercise the pelvic muscles. You may be able to get help from biofeedback or a physical therapist.

How do Kegel exercises improve sexual function?

Kegel exercises can improve vaginal muscle tone and sensation. This can help women be more sexually responsive and may help improve orgasms. The exercises can also improve a man's sexual response and help delay ejaculation during sex. However, the main benefit of Kegel exercises is that they may help stop the leaking of urine.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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