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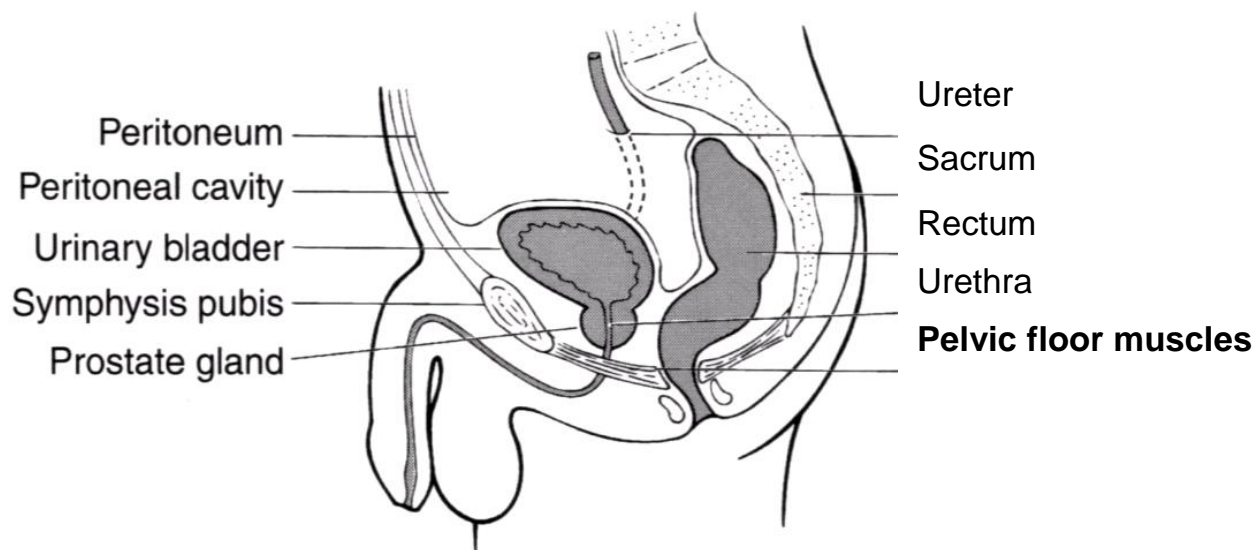
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## Pelvic Floor Exercises for Men

Department of Urology

### What is the Pelvic Floor?

The pelvic floor is made up of layers of muscle and other tissues stretching like a hammock across the floor of the pelvis. It is attached to your tail bone (coccyx) at the back and to the pubic bone in front. The urethra (bladder outlet) and the rectum (back passage) pass through the pelvic floor. The hammock of muscles and other tissues supports the bladder and the bowel and plays an important role in bladder and bowel control.



### How do the Pelvic Floor Muscles become Weak?

The pelvic floor muscles can be weakened by:-

- some operations e.g. radical prostatectomy for prostate cancer
- a chronic cough, such as smoker's cough, chronic bronchitis or asthma
- being overweight
- continual straining to empty your bowels, usually due to constipation

Although there is no research evidence, it is thought by many that lack of general fitness and persistent heavy lifting tend to result in weakening of the pelvic floor.

Neurological damage (e.g. after a stroke or spinal injury, or resulting from multiple sclerosis) can also cause weakness of the pelvic floor muscles.

### **Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises**

You can improve control of your bladder and bowel by doing exercises to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. These exercises may also be useful in conjunction with a bladder retraining programme aimed at improving bladder control in people who experience the [urgent need to pass urine frequently](#) and may not always "make it to the toilet in time".

### **How to Identify your Pelvic Floor Muscles**

It is essential to identify correctly the muscles that need to be exercised.

1. Sit or lie comfortably with the muscles of your thighs, buttocks and abdomen relaxed.
2. Tighten and draw in the ring of muscle around the back passage as if you are trying to control diarrhoea or wind. Relax it. Practise this movement several times until you are sure you are exercising the correct muscle. Do not hold your breath: keep breathing normally. You need to concentrate on using the correct muscles - do not tighten your buttocks or thighs. You may find that the lower stomach muscles pull in gently at the same time – this is okay as the pelvic floor and deep stomach muscles often work together. However, it is important not to brace the stomach muscles strongly when attempting to tighten the pelvic floor muscles as this may cause increased urinary leakage.
3. Each time that you tighten your pelvic floor muscles you may feel the base of your penis move up slightly towards your abdomen and a lifting of your testicles.

## **Doing Your Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises**

Now that you can feel the muscles working, you can start to exercise them:-

1. Tighten and draw in strongly the muscles around the anus. Try to hold this contraction strongly as you slowly count to five, then release slowly and relax for five seconds. You should have a definite feeling of "letting go" as you relax.
2. Repeat ("squeeze and lift"), then relax. It is important to rest in between each contraction. If you find it easy to hold the contraction for a count of five, try to hold for six seconds, and then over time gradually progress up to ten seconds.
3. Repeat this as many times as you are able up to a maximum of 10 squeezes. Make each tightening a strong, slow and controlled contraction.
4. Now do ten fast, but strong contractions, pulling up and then immediately fully letting go.
5. Do this whole exercise routine 3 times every day. You can do it in a variety of positions - lying, sitting or standing.
6. While doing the exercises:-
  - DO NOT hold your breath.
  - DO NOT push down instead of squeezing and lifting up.

Do your exercises carefully. The quality is important. Fewer good exercises will be more beneficial than many half-hearted ones.

### **Make the Exercises a Daily Routine**

Once you have learnt how to do these exercises, they should be done regularly; giving each set your full attention. It might be helpful to have regular times during the day for doing the exercises - for example, after going to the toilet, when lying in bed.

**Always tighten your pelvic floor muscles while you are getting up from a chair, coughing, sneezing or lifting (and any other activities that cause leakage). This is called "the knack"; using "the knack" will help you to regain control of your bladder.**

Good results take time. In order to build up your pelvic floor muscles to their maximum strength you will need to work hard at these exercises.

You will probably not notice an improvement for several weeks and you will not reach your maximum performance for a few months.

When you have recovered control of your bladder or bowel you should continue to tighten your pelvic floor before and during a cough, sneeze or lift.

### **Other Tips to Help Your Pelvic Floor**

- Avoid constipation and prevent any straining during a bowel movement.
- Seek medical advice for hay-fever, asthma or bronchitis to reduce sneezing and coughing. Giving up smoking may reduce coughing.
- Keep your weight within the normal range for your height and age.
- Share the lifting of heavy loads. Remember to use "the knack" when lifting.

### **EMG Biofeedback**

EMG biofeedback involves measurement of the electrical activity of the pelvic floor, using a small probe (positioned in the back passage) which is connected to a small hand-held machine. This is connected to a computer screen and provides visual feedback about how the muscles are working - and hopefully improving. This can be used with pelvic floor muscle exercises to improve the strength, endurance and function of the pelvic floor, although there has been no clear research to prove its effectiveness in men. EMG biofeedback needs to be used in conjunction with a specialised practitioner, usually a specialist physiotherapist or specialist nurse.

### **Contact details**

If you have any further question please contact:-

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Adapted from: -

<http://www.continence-foundation.org.uk/symptoms-and-treatments/pelvic-floor-exercises.php>

**"This document is available in Welsh /  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg".**