

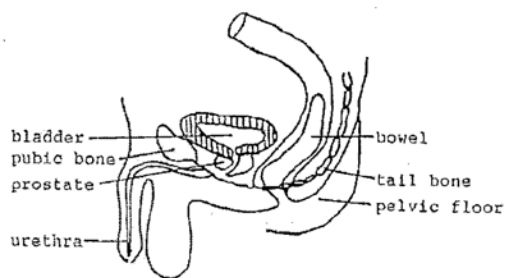
Kegel Exercise Instructions

The pelvic muscles are large muscles that support the organs in the pelvis—the bladder, rectum, uterus, and vagina (in women). They start at the pubic bone (in the front) and end at the tailbone (in the back). These muscles are voluntary muscles, which means that we can control them. Voluntary muscles are like the ones in your back or legs; they can be strengthened with use or become weak from lack of use. The pelvic muscles help other special muscles, called sphincters, with bladder and bowel control.

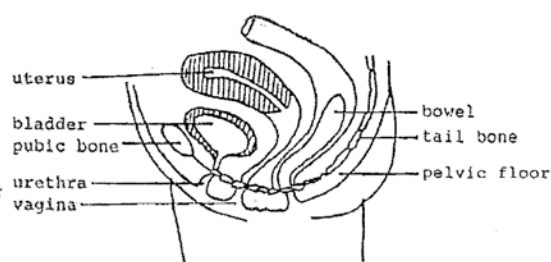
The openings of the urinary bladder, vagina, and rectum pass through these muscles and are attached to them. When you cough or sneeze, there is pressure down onto these muscles. However, when you shut off the flow of urine or hold in a bowel movement, you elevate and bring the muscles together, and temporarily close off the openings. Kegel exercises are specific exercises for the pelvic floor muscles. Over several weeks, Kegel exercises strengthen the muscles and improve your ability to hold urine and stool. They have been helpful for people experiencing bladder and bowel leaking, chronic constipation, and pelvic and rectal leaking.

To do the Kegel exercises, you need to tighten the pelvic muscles as if you are trying to hold back gas. Hold for 10 seconds. Do NOT tighten your abdomen (the belly muscles), legs, or buttocks! The feeling **must** be inside the pelvis. When your muscles are weak, it is hard to hold them for this long. If you feel the muscles letting go, it is okay, just let them go. The next step is to let the muscles rest or relax for 10 seconds. Sometimes it is helpful to think of the pelvic muscles as a hammock. When you tighten the muscles, the “hammock” lifts up.

One set of Kegel exercises is three repetitions. Do one set 10 times a day. You may do this about once an hour. Try to do the Kegels at cues, like before you get out of bed, during commercials on TV, when you are stopped at a red light, or when you sit down to eat a meal. As the muscles get stronger and your symptoms are in better control, your doctor will guide you to increasing the number of sets. You **MUST** continue the Kegels even when your symptoms are in control.



Side View of the Male Pelvis



Side View of the Female Pelvis