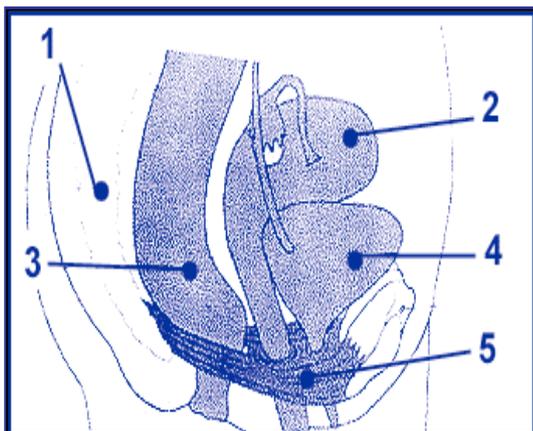


## Urology Department

# Pelvic floor exercises Stage 2 (women)

### How does the pelvic floor work?

The pelvic floor muscles are kept slightly tense to stop you leaking urine from the bladder, or faeces from the bowel. They relax when you want to pass urine, or have your bowels open, then they tighten again afterwards to give you control. When these muscles become weak and sag, they give less control, so you leak, especially when you cough, sneeze etc.



1. The spine
2. The uterus (womb)
3. The rectum
4. The bladder
5. The pelvic floor muscles

### Pelvic floor exercises

These exercises can strengthen the muscles so they once again give support and improve your bladder control and urine leakage. Like all



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muscles, the more you use them, the stronger they will be. It is important you learn to do the exercises correctly; you can do them any time, any place, any where, for example, standing up, sitting down, lying, walking etc.

In a comfortable position, for example, sitting with knees slightly apart, imagine that you are trying to stop yourself passing urine or wind. To do this, you must squeeze the muscles around the bladder opening and the back passage and lift them **up**. You should feel the area between your legs move up, but not your legs or buttocks tighten.

**Make sure you do not link these exercises to your breathing, as this will limit how long and how many exercises you can do.**

### Stress incontinence

This is when you leak urine when you cough, laugh, run etc. It can affect women of all ages, and often starts with:

- pregnancy
- being over-weight
- the menopause

The above all cause weakness of the pelvic floor muscles.

### Lift exercises

This is where you pretend your pelvic floor is a lift. Contract your pelvic floor as high as it can go, as mentioned earlier, you have just 'visited the third floor', and gently relax. Now pretend you need to visit the 'first floor', so don't draw it all the way up just yet. Hold the muscle for a count to two, then take it up to the 'second floor' and hold it for two seconds, then up to the 'third floor' and hold for two seconds. Now return to the 'second floor' for two seconds and down again to the 'first floor' for two seconds, finally to the 'ground floor' and relax. Gradually increase the hold on each 'floor'. Do these exercises two to three times a day.

### Endurance exercises

Lift your pelvic floor muscle up as high as you can, now gently release it until you are holding it at about 30% strength, then keep it held for about

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20 seconds initially, or as long as you can, for example, the time it takes to do a task (such as preparing cups and plates for a meal). Do this exercise two to three times a day.

When you do these 'lift' and 'endurance' exercises the 'static' and 'fast' exercises can be adjusted to ensure you are doing just 10 sessions of any type 10 times a day.

### **Remember**

The following can put strain on the pelvic floor:

- Being overweight
- Poor lifting techniques

Always try to do the exercises in different positions.

If you forget the exercises do not 'double up' at the next session, as this will over-tire the muscle. Instead, it is best to do the missed exercises at ½ hour intervals.

**If you stop doing these exercises the pelvic floor muscle will return to the weakened state it started at.**

### **Remember**

Gradually replace caffeine drinks with decaffeinated.

### **Self assessment examination**

If the nurse has discussed with you how to perform a self assessment you can if you wish do this in-between visits.

Always remember to **lift** your pelvic floor, and never bear down whenever you are carrying anything, or if you are coughing/sneezing. It is very important to fit these exercises into your daily routine and find ways that will remind you to do them, for example, first thing in the morning, last thing at night and every time you have a drink, or every time you have **finished** on the toilet.

**Never try to stop passing urine mid flow.**

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### Further Information

For further information, please contact the Urology Department

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