

## Department of Urology

# Pelvic Floor Exercises for Men

Men experience a variety of problems with their urinary system, leading to unwanted leakage of urine. Some also have difficulty controlling wind or leakage from the bowels. Often this is due to a weakness of the muscles of the pelvic floor. These muscles have an important function in preventing these troublesome conditions. In particular pelvic floor exercises can be effective following surgery on the prostate and when men experience a dribble after passing water.

### What is the pelvic floor?

The pelvic floor is made up of layers of muscle and other tissues. These stretch from side to side like a hammock and are attached to your tailbone (coccyx) at the back and your pubic bone at the front. The urethra (water pipe) and rectum (back passage) pass through the pelvic floor muscles. The hammock of the muscle supports the bladder and the bowel and plays an important role in bladder and bowel control.

### Why do the pelvic floor muscles become weak?

The pelvic floor muscles can be weakened by some operations on the prostate gland. Also straining to empty your bowels due to constipation, chronic coughs, being overweight and a lack of general fitness and persistent heavy lifting can affect your pelvic floor muscles. Furthermore, neurological damage such as a stroke, spinal injury or multiple sclerosis can also cause poor pelvic muscle function.

### What are pelvic floor exercises?

You can improve control of your bladder and bowel by doing exercises to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. These can also be useful when used with a bladder retraining program that aims to improve your bladder control if you need to pass urine urgently and frequently.



## Patient Information

### Identifying the pelvic floor muscles

- Sit or lie comfortably with the muscles of your thighs, buttocks and abdomen relaxed.
- Tighten the ring of muscle around the back passage as if you are trying to control diarrhoea or wind and then relax it. Practice this movement several times until you are sure that you are exercising the right muscle. Try not to squeeze your buttocks or tighten your thighs or tummy muscles.
- Imagine you are passing water, trying to stop the flow mid stream and restarting it. (You can do this for real if you wish, but do so only to learn which muscles are the correct ones to use. Otherwise it may interfere with normal bladder emptying). Each time you tighten your pelvic floor muscles you may feel the base of your penis move up slightly towards your abdomen.

### Doing your pelvic floor exercises

Now you can feel the pelvic muscles working, you can start to exercise them.

- Tighten and draw in the muscles around the anus (back passage) and the urethra (water pipe) all at once. Lift them up inside you and hold this position for one second and immediately let go. Repeat this for up to ten squeezes.
- Do the same thing again but, this time, try to make each contraction strong, slow and controlled, tighten and draw in the same muscles, lift them up inside you and hold this position as you count to five. Release the muscles slowly and relax for a few seconds repeat this for up to ten squeezes.
- Try to imagine you are going up in a lift to the fourth floor! Try and hold this contraction as strongly as you can. Count to five. Release slowly descending in the lift and relax. You should have a definite feeling of letting go but do not crash your lift!
- Once you find it easy to hold the contraction for a count of five, gradually build up and try to hold it for longer (up to ten seconds).

## Patient Information

- Repeat these 2 sets of exercises 5 times daily.

Do this exercise routine in varying positions - lying, standing or sitting; whatever feels comfortable to you.

Whilst doing the exercises **do not** hold your breath, tighten your tummy, buttocks and thighs or push down. Instead squeeze and lift up.

### **Make the exercises a daily routine**

Once you have learnt these exercises they should be done regularly. You may wish to tighten your pelvic floor muscles while you are getting up from your chair, coughing or lifting. Some men find that tightening the pelvic floor muscles before they undertake such activities can help them regain control. These exercises can help you gain control of your bladder soon after surgery. Good results take time.

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 doing the exercises twice a day for life.

### **Tips to help your pelvic floor**

- Do your exercises well
- The quality is important
- Avoid constipation
- Keep weight within the right range for your age and height.
- Share the lifting of heavy loads.

## Patient Information

### Further Information

For further information please contact Clinical Nurse Specialist in Urology on 024 7696 5373.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 5149 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email [feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk](mailto:feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk)

#### Document History

Department:	Urology
Contact:	25149
Updated:	January 2022
Review:	January 2024
Version:	8.2
Reference:	HIC/LFT/165/06