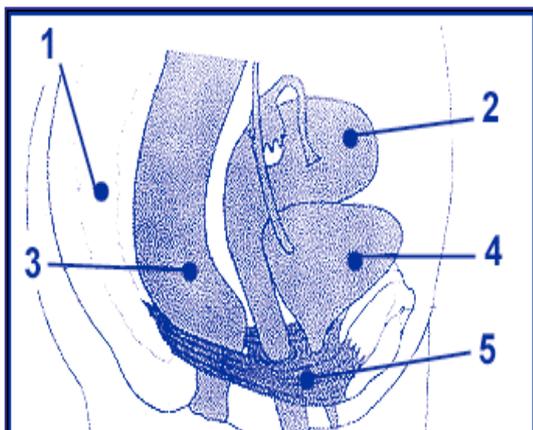


Urology Department

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 leaking faeces from the bowel. Your pelvic floor muscles relax when you want to pass urine or have your bowels open. The muscles then tighten again afterwards to give you control. When these muscles become weak and sag, they give you less control, so you leak. Leaking can especially happen when you cough, sneeze etc.



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



Patient Information

Pelvic floor exercises

These exercises can strengthen your pelvic floor muscles so they once again give support, improve your bladder control and urine leakage. Like all 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, anywhere (e.g. standing up, sitting down, lying, walking etc.).

To exercise in a comfortable position, sit with your knees slightly apart. Try to imagine that you are trying to stop yourself passing urine or passing wind. To do this exercise, you must squeeze the pelvic floor muscles around the bladder opening and the back passage (rectum) and lift them up. You should feel the area between your legs move up, but you do not want 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 overweight
- 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 in the earlier exercise. You have just 'visited the third floor', and then 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 2, then take it up to the 'second floor' and hold it for 2 seconds, then up to the 'third floor' and hold for 2 seconds.

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Now return to the 'second floor' for 2 seconds and down again to the 'first floor' for 2 seconds. Finally return to the 'ground floor' and relax. Gradually increase the hold on each 'floor'. Do these exercises 2 to 3 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 20 seconds initially, or as long as you can. This could be the time it takes to do a task (such as preparing cups and plates for a meal). Do these exercise 2 to 3 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 your muscles. Instead, it is best to do the missed exercises at 30 minute intervals.

If you stop doing these exercises your pelvic floor muscles will return to the weakened state they started at.

Caffeine

You are advised to gradually replace caffeine drinks with decaffeinated.

Patient Information

Self-assessment examination

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

Advice

Always remember to lift your pelvic floor, and never bear down whenever you are carrying anything, or if you are coughing or sneezing.

It is very important to fit these exercises into your daily routine and find ways that will remind you to do them (e.g. 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.

Further Information

For further information, please contact the Urology Department

Telephone: 024 7696 5296

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