



Pelvic floor exercises

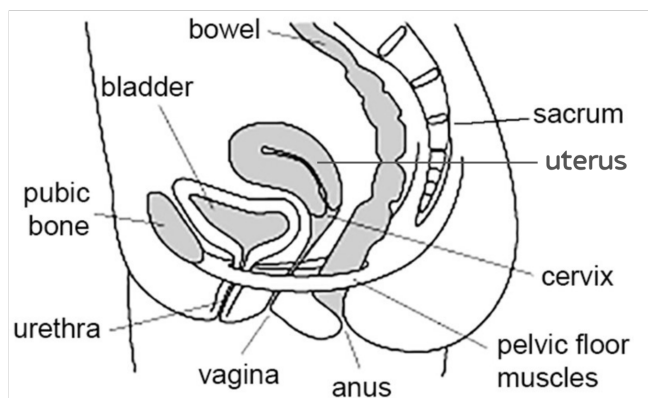
What is the pelvic floor?

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles and ligaments that support your bladder, uterus (womb), and bowel.

These muscles attach to your pubic bone at the front and tail bone at the back, forming the base of your pelvis.

Three openings pass through your pelvic floor:

- the urethra, which carries urine (wee) from your bladder
- the vagina, which connects to your uterus
- and the anus, which carries faeces (poo) from your bowel.



What do the pelvic floor muscles do?

A strong pelvic floor helps you control your bladder and bowels, so you can hold on and go to the toilet when you choose to.

Weak pelvic floor muscles can cause you to leak urine or faeces (incontinence) or cause your bladder, uterus, or bowel to drop from their normal position (prolapse).

What weakens pelvic floor muscles?

Many things can weaken your pelvic floor muscles, including:

- pregnancy
- childbirth, especially after having a large baby or pushing for a long time
- being overweight
- straining too much to do a poo
- regular heavy lifting
- excessive coughing
- hormonal changes during menopause
- ageing.

How can you make your pelvic floor muscles stronger?

You should exercise your pelvic floor muscles most days to keep them strong and prevent weakness. Regular exercise can strengthen weak muscles and make them work effectively again.

Pelvic floor muscle exercise

- Squeeze and lift the muscles around your front, middle, and back passages, as if you're trying to stop yourself from passing wind or urine.
- Hold for 6 seconds while breathing normally.
- Relax your muscles completely for 6 seconds. This is one repetition.
- Repeat this exercise 6 times in a row. This is one set.
- Do 3 sets a day, 5 days a week.
- As your muscles get stronger, gradually increase the hold for 8 seconds and relax for 6 seconds.
- Aim to build up to 12 repetitions, 3 sets a day, 5 days a week.

Functional bracing

Tighten your pelvic floor before you cough, sneeze, laugh, or do things that require effort, like lifting.

When doing the exercises, you should:

- feel your pelvic floor muscles 'lift up' inside you, not move down
- relax your thighs and buttocks
- breathe normally
- relax your muscles completely between repetitions
- stop if your muscles get tired.

How can you prevent pelvic floor problems?

To keep your pelvic floor muscles strong and prevent pelvic floor symptoms, try to avoid:

- constipation or straining when you poo
- lifting heavy things too often
- coughing a lot
- gaining too much weight.

Make pelvic floor training part of your life by:

- tightening your pelvic floor muscles every time you cough, sneeze, or lift
- staying active with regular exercise
- progressing your exercises by doing them in different positions, for example, on your hands and knees, standing, or sitting.

For more information

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Do you need an interpreter?



Interpreter

You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

1800respect.org.au

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