

Kegel - Pelvic Floor Exercises

Arnold Kegel, M.D, developed the Kegel (pronounced Kay-Gill) exercises. The Kegel exercise is performed to strengthen the pelvic floor muscle, which is sometimes called the pubococcygeus or PC muscle. This is the muscle that encircles the urethra, the vagina and the rectum.

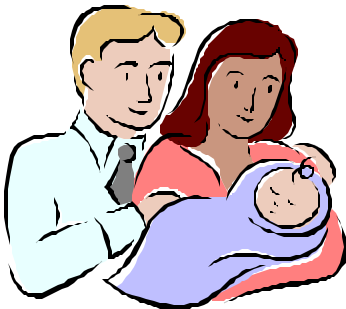
Why Exercise?

Strengthening this muscle helps women deal with the problem of urinary stress incontinence.

Urinary stress incontinence is a common problem. Due to insufficient muscle tone, urine may be lost when one coughs, sneezes, laughs, or jumps. The PC muscle, when exercised:

- strengthens urinary control
- improves the ability to experience stronger orgasms
- can help prevent the uterus from sagging down into the vagina (prolapse), the bladder from bulging back into the vagina (cystocele), and similarly, the rectum from bulging forward into the vagina (rectocele).

Practiced regularly, Kegel exercises will result in increased ability to tighten and relax voluntarily, thus helping eliminate pain during intercourse, and assist in the preparation for childbearing and recovering PC muscle tone after childbirth.



How to Exercise

Identify the PC Muscle. To locate the correct muscle, try stopping your urine flow by contracting the muscle. When urine slows or stops, you have targeted the PC muscle. You may alternatively insert a finger in the vagina or rectum and try to squeeze the muscle, which is about 1 inch inside, around your finger. If you wish, you can place a plastic glove or a sandwich bag over your finger. This technique is necessary only to locate the muscle, not to perform the exercise.

After you have found the muscle, squeeze for 2 seconds. Do not contract your abdomen, buttocks, or thighs. Be sure not to hold your breath. Relax for 10 seconds. Concentrate as much on relaxation as you do on contraction. Do 10 repetitions twice a day.

When you have mastered the technique, you may begin to increase the length of time you contract the muscle. Increase the time by 1 second every couple of days until you get up to 10 seconds of contraction and 10 seconds of relaxation. Be sure not to hold your breath or contract other muscles.

Like any muscle, the PC muscle can be strained and become sore with over-exercise. If this happens, stop the exercise for a couple days, and then resume with fewer sets per day, gradually increasing to perhaps 100 contractions per day.

Kegel exercises can be continued indefinitely. Increased muscle tone results in greater sensation during intercourse for both partners. Some men report that stopping thrusting and performing several voluntary PC contractions help to maintain erection and delay ejaculation.

