



# Pelvic floor exercises in pregnancy

Information for patients



The pelvic floor muscles are located between your legs, and run from your pubic bone at the front to the base of your spine at the back. They are shaped like a sling and support your bladder, bowel and vagina. The hormones and extra weight of pregnancy can affect these muscles resulting in leakage from the bladder (stress incontinence) that can persist after pregnancy. To help to prevent this problem, and also reduce the risk of vaginal prolapse in the future, it is very important to exercise your pelvic floor muscles throughout pregnancy. Even after pregnancy you should continue to do this simple exercise as part of your regular daily activities.

To do a pelvic floor lift:

- Tighten your back passage, as if you are trying to stop yourself passing wind
- Keep lifting the muscle up, until you really can't lift it any higher. You will feel the muscle at the front lifting too, and may feel the base of your abdomen tighten slightly.
- Hold the squeeze right at the top for as long as you can – aim for 10 seconds, but if you can't manage this, try for at least a few seconds before relaxing
- Try to repeat this exercise a few more times.

Aim to do the exercise several times each day. It helps if you associate it with something you do regularly – for instance washing your hands when you have been to the toilet.

If you experience any leakage from your bladder when coughing/ sneezing or laughing, this could indicate weakness of the pelvic floor. Ask to see a Women's Health Physiotherapist for advice please contact them on 01772 524437



## Sources of further information

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

**Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.**

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

### References

Joint statement on Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercise

Improving health outcomes for women following pregnancy and birth

Royal College of Midwives

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

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