



Information for  
patients and  
carers

**Pelvic floor exercises in  
pregnancy**

## Pelvic floor exercises

The pelvic floor muscles are located at the base of your pelvis, 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. After pregnancy you should continue to do these simple exercises throughout your life to promote pelvic floor health.

To do a pelvic floor lift, start in a comfortable position:

- Try to imagine trying to stop yourself from passing wind, and stopping the flow of urine at the same time
- As you do this you should feel a lifting of the pelvic floor muscles in an upwards and forwards direction
- Try not to hold your breath, but continue to breathe normally throughout the contraction
- You may notice that your lower tummy tightens during this contraction, this is ok, but you should keep your buttocks and thighs relaxed throughout

Slow/long squeezes:

- Hold the squeeze for as long as you can. Count how many seconds you can do this for
- When you feel the muscles tire or you are unable to continue to hold let the muscles fully relax. Repeat this as many times as you can, holding for the same length of time

## Fast squeezes

- Contract your pelvic floor muscles quickly, then immediately let go and relax
- Repeat this as many times as can until the muscles get tired. Keep a count of how many you manage

Aim to be able to perform 10 slow contractions, for 10 seconds each, and then follow with 10 fast squeezes each time you practise your pelvic floor exercises. It may take several months of practise before you can achieve this, but try to set this as your goal each time you practise.

Ideally you should try to do these exercises 3 times a day. Try setting a reminder on your phone, downloading the NHS 'Squeezy App' as your reminder, or linking the exercises to a task that happens at least 3 times a day, to help you with compliance.

If you find these exercises difficult, try starting them lying down, and as you get stronger progress into sitting and eventually standing-up to make these exercises more challenging and more functional.

## Self-Assessment

To check that you are doing this correctly, try sitting on the edge of the toilet seat with a hand-held mirror. Observe what happens during a contraction. You should see the skin between the vagina and back passage (perineum) move upwards towards the body, away from the mirror during the contraction. The perineum should not bulge downwards during the contraction, if this happens STOP and contact the Women's Health physiotherapy team for advice. It is normal to see

the perineum relax back to its normal position at the end of the contraction.

Alternatively, you could insert a finger or two into the vagina, as you contract your pelvic floor muscles you should feel the muscles tightening around your fingers, and letting go as you relax.

If you are struggling with your technique or 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.

## Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact:  
Women's Health Physiotherapist: [womenshealth.physio@lthtr.nhs.uk](mailto:womenshealth.physio@lthtr.nhs.uk)

## Sources of further information

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

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

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

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

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

**Cantonese:**

如果你希望以另外一種格式接收該資訊，請和我們聯絡，不必猶豫。

**Gujarati:**

જો તમને આ માહિતી બીજી રચના કે ફોર્મેટમાં મેળવવાની ઇચ્છા હોય, તો કૃપા કરી અમારો સંપર્ક કરતા અચકાશો નહિ.

**Hungarian:**

Kérjük, vegye fel velünk a kapcsolatot, ha más formában kéri ezt az információt.

**Polish:**

Jeżeli chciał(a)by Pan/Pani otrzymać niniejsze informacje w innym formacie, prosimy o kontakt.

**Punjabi:**

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵਿਚ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਨਾ ਝਿਜਕੋ।

**Urdu:**

اگر آپ اس معلومات کو کسی اور صورت میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کرنے میں ہچکچاہٹ محسوس نہ کریں۔

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