



# The British Association of Urological Surgeons

## Pelvic floor exercises for women

### Information about pelvic floor exercises

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You have this leaflet because someone has told you to learn pelvic floor exercises. This leaflet gives you simple, easy-to-read details. Expert doctors in the UK have written it. Please also remember the advice your own doctor or nurse has already given you.

#### What is the pelvic floor?

The pelvic floor is a layer of muscles and bands that stretches like a hammock. It goes from the pubic bone at the front of your pelvis to the coccyx at the bottom of your spine. The coccyx is your tail bone.

The pelvic floor has several jobs:

- It holds up your pelvic and tummy organs, especially when you are standing or straining.
- It helps the water pipe stay closed when you cough, sneeze or strain.
- It is used to control leaking of wind or poo from your lower bowel.
- It helps sex feel better by tightening during sex.

#### Why can it get weak?

Your pelvic floor can get weak because of:

- having a baby
- damage to nerves in your pelvic floor
- pushing too hard when trying to poo
- not moving enough
- coughing a lot, such as with asthma or smoking
- going through menopause
- getting older

When this happens, you may leak pee when you laugh, cough, lift or move around.

#### How can these exercises help?

Doing pelvic floor exercises can make these muscles stronger. This helps you hold in pee better. It may stop leaks. Like any muscle, the more you use it, the stronger it gets.

## How do I find my pelvic floor muscles?

It can be hard to find these muscles at first. You will not see them move from the outside. Try these steps:

### Step 1

Sit in a comfy position with your knees slightly apart. Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself passing wind. To do this, you must squeeze the muscle around the back passage.

Try lifting and squeezing the muscle as if you have wind. You should be able to feel the muscle move. Your buttocks or legs should not move at all. You should notice that the skin around your back passage tightens up. It creates the feeling of lifting you from your chair.

### Step 2

Now imagine you are sitting on the toilet and trying to stop pee from coming out. Use the same muscles as before. This may feel harder.

Do not try this while you are actually peeing. It can cause problems.

### Step 3

Try to squeeze the muscles around your bottom and vagina at the same time. Lift up inside as if you are trying to stop both pee and wind.

Do not hold your breath or tighten your tummy, legs or bottom. If you can do this, you are using your pelvic floor.

## How do I practise the exercises?

You need to do 2 types of squeezes:

**Slow squeezes.** Hold the squeeze for up to 10 seconds. Rest for 4 seconds. Repeat about 10 times.

**Fast squeezes.** Squeeze and lift quickly. Hold for 1 second. Repeat 10 times.

Do 1 set of slow squeezes followed by 1 set of fast squeezes. Do this about 6 times a day. Do not overdo it or the muscles will get tired.

You can do the exercises standing, sitting or lying down. You may find it easier at first to do them sitting down.

It may take time to learn, but with practice you will get better.

## What else can help?

These exercises may take 3 to 6 months to work. Keep doing them to stop problems coming back.

Here are some tips that may help:

- Do your exercises often. Link them to daily tasks like:
  - going to the toilet
  - answering the phone
  - turning on a tap

- Check you are doing them right. Gently place a thumb or 2 fingers inside your vagina. You should feel a soft squeeze.
- Try to squeeze before coughing or lifting something.
- Drink normally. Aim for 6 to 8 cups per day. This is 2 litres. Stay away from caffeine and alcohol if you can.
- Do not go to the toilet “just in case”. Go only when your bladder feels full.
- Keep a healthy weight. Extra weight puts more pressure on your pelvic floor.
- Avoid constipation. Pushing too hard can strain your bladder and bowel.
- If things do not improve after 3 months, speak to a doctor or nurse.
- Other things that may help include:
  - weighted vaginal cones
  - biofeedback
  - electrical stimulation

Ask your GP, nurse or urologist for advice.

## Where can I get more help?

You can find more help and support from:

### Bladder and Bowel Community

Forward House, 17 High Street,  
Henley-in-Arden  
B95 5AA

Phone: +44 (0)800 031 5406

Website: <https://www.bladderandbowel.org/bladder/>

## Important

We have worked hard to make this leaflet clear and correct. But it cannot replace advice from your own doctor or nurse. Always ask them if you are worried or unsure.

## What should I do with this leaflet?

You can keep this leaflet. If you have more questions, ask your doctor or nurse. They can explain more.

### Online access

You can see this leaflet on the internet.

Scan the special picture (QR code).

### Feedback

We'd love to know what you think! You can share your thoughts by emailing us at [admin@baus.org.uk](mailto:admin@baus.org.uk)



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1. **Identify the main idea** of the text.