



Pelvic Floor Strengthening

The pelvic floor consists of several layers of muscle and connective tissue (also referred to as myofascia) that create a hammock-like structure at the base of the pelvis. This myofascial network has several distinct roles including:

- Supporting the organs (bladder, uterus, and colon) within the pelvis
- Assisting in stopping/starting the flow of urine or the passage of gas or stool
- Aiding in normal sexual activity
- Stabilizing the low back and abdomen by contracting prior to and during movement

Description and Performance of the Pelvic Floor

The pelvic floor muscles consist of approximately 70% slow twitch (endurance) muscle fibers and 30% fast twitch (sprint) muscle fibers. As mentioned above, the pelvic floor muscles act to keep us continent at all times and also act to hold in urine when sudden pressure is placed on the abdomen/pelvis such as when you sneeze or cough. Additionally, the muscles help stabilize the core for postural endurance and, when needed, respond quickly to certain motions such as squatting.

Locating the muscles can be difficult. Instruction by your practitioner is most helpful, however if you are having difficulty you can use self-palpation (pressing externally on the perineum) or a mirror at home. Some visualization cues include:

- Lifting the muscle up and into the body as if holding back gas
- Squeezing around the urethra as if you were trying to stop the flow of urine
- Contracting and lifting the vagina up towards the pubic bone

Short Quick Exercise:

1. Begin lying on your back, head supported with pillow, knees bent and feet flat.
2. Squeeze quickly and hold for ____ seconds.
3. Relax fully for the same amount of time ____ seconds.
4. Repeat ____ times.

Long Sustained Exercise:

1. Begin lying on your back, head supported with pillow, knees bent and feet flat.
2. Squeeze slowly and gradually and hold for ____ seconds.
3. Relax fully for the same amount of time ____ seconds.
4. Repeat ____ times.

Special Tips:

Empty your bladder before completing your exercises. Try and avoid using accessory muscles such as your buttocks, inner thighs and abdomen. Always remember to breathe during these exercises.

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