

Exercising Your Pelvic Floor Muscles

“Kegels” strengthen the pelvic floor, which may help you hold urine longer

Weak pelvic floor muscles may contribute to overactive bladder (OAB). Doing several squeezes of these muscles may help decrease urinary urges and leakage. Learning Kegel exercises takes some concentration at first, but the more you do them, the easier they'll become. Here's how you can get started:

STEP 1: LOCATE your pelvic floor muscles

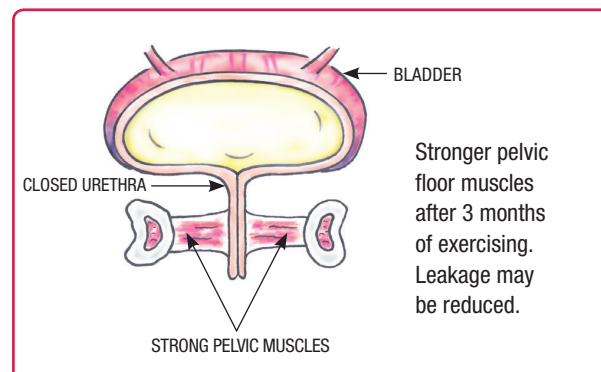
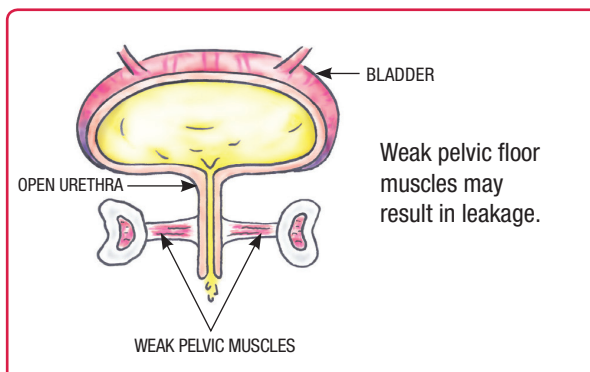
To do this, try stopping and starting your urine flow midstream. The muscle that controls this action—your urinary sphincter—is the one you'll be exercising. *(Don't do Kegel exercises regularly while urinating, because this can lead to dysfunctional voiding.)*

STEP 2: SQUEEZE this muscle for three seconds, then relax for three seconds

Do a set of 10 squeezes in three different positions—sitting, standing, and lying down—to improve control. If you tire, rest briefly, then resume. Three sets of 10 squeezes will take about three minutes to do.

STEP 3: REPEAT these exercises at least three times a day, every day

Kegels can be done at any time: while brushing teeth, watching TV, waiting at a red light or in a store line, reading in bed, or even while going on a walk. Choose a few activities that you do every day and practice Kegels at those times.



Kegel tips: How to make sure you're doing them right

A common mistake people make when learning Kegel exercises is contracting the wrong muscle. When done correctly, all other muscles should be relaxed. Here are some tips to help you exercise the right ones:

- **Make sure it's not your stomach...**

Stomach muscles push urine out rather than holding it in, so confirm that you are not tightening them at the same time.

- **Make sure it's not your thighs...**

You'll know if you are also squeezing your thighs if your upper legs are moving as you exercise.

- **Make sure it's not your buttocks...**

If your body rises up and down as you squeeze, then you are contracting your buttocks; to help avoid this, try doing these exercises while sitting down in front of a mirror.

- **Make sure it's not your chest...**

If you find yourself holding your breath while doing Kegels, then you may be unnecessarily tightening your chest muscles.

For help learning or performing pelvic floor muscle exercises talk to your doctor about the following therapies, which can be combined with Kegel exercises to assist you:

- **Biofeedback can help you locate or control your pelvic floor muscles**

Small sensors are placed in the vagina or rectum and on the abdomen. These give an indication when you tighten the right muscles, providing feedback as to when you are doing the exercises correctly.

- **Electrical stimulation can help you contract your pelvic floor muscles**

A small electrode is placed inside your vagina, delivering electrical stimulation of the pelvic floor muscles.

MAKE KEGEL EXERCISES PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Many patients notice their overactive bladder (OAB) symptoms start to improve within 6 to 8 weeks. Strengthening the pelvic floor muscles can take time, so keep at it!