

## Pelvic floor exercises

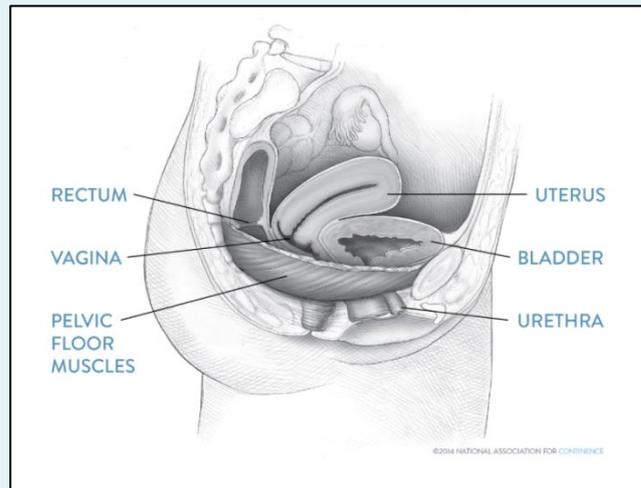
The pelvic floor is a large group of muscles which pass from your pubic bone at the front to your coccyx (tail bone) behind, forming a bowl shape. They support your bladder, uterus and bowel.

It is extremely **important to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles after you have given birth** to prevent problems with incontinence (leaking of urine), prolapse (bulging of one or more of the pelvic organs into the vagina), lower back / pelvic pain and increase sensation during intercourse.

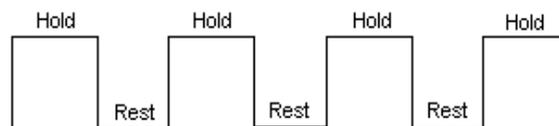
### How to exercise your pelvic floor muscles

In sitting or lying, slowly tighten the muscles around your anus and vagina, lifting up and in as if trying to stop yourself from passing wind and urine. Try to only squeeze these muscles, avoiding tightening your buttocks, squeezing your legs or holding your breath.

Do these exercises **3-4 times / day**.



**Exercise 1:** To build up the endurance of these muscles, hold this contraction for as many seconds as you can and then fully relax. Relax for as long as you have squeezed. Repeat 10 times. **Try to build up to 10 seconds x 10.**



**Exercise 2:** The muscles need to be able to work quickly so that they can react to stresses such as coughing, sneezing or running. Imagine the muscles are an elevator. Lift up the muscles to the top floor as quickly as you can. Relax fully.

Repeat up to **20 times**.



It is important to continue with your exercises as part of your **daily routine for LIFE**.

If you experience any problems controlling your bladder or bowels or struggle to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles after 6 weeks of training, speak to your GP or midwife. Ask to be referred to **Women's Health Physiotherapy**.