

Pelvic Floor Exercises for Women

This leaflet offers more information about pelvic floor exercises for women. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

What are the pelvic floor muscles?

Your pelvic floor is a group of muscles which can be found at the base of your pelvis. These muscles attach from your tailbone, to your pubic bone and across both your sitting bones, to form a bowl/hammock like shape.

They support your pelvic organs and surround the openings of the vagina, bowel and bladder helping maintain continence and enhance sexual function.



What are the signs and symptoms of Pelvic Floor dysfunction?

Symptoms you may experience due to a weakened pelvic floor are:

- Stress incontinence (leaking urine during exercise or when coughing, sneezing or lifting)
- Urgency (a sudden strong desire to pass urine)
- Prolapse (a heaviness/dragging in the vagina).

How do I exercise my pelvic floor?

There are two main forms of pelvic floor exercises: long holds and fast squeezes. They are both equally important- the long holds aim to improve endurance and the short squeezes aim to improve your reactivity.

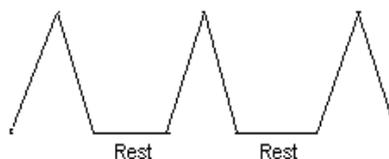
While sitting or lying, slowly tighten the muscles around your anus and vagina, lifting up and in as if trying to stop yourself from passing wind and urine.

Exercise 1: To build up the endurance of these muscles, hold this contraction for as long as you can (up to 10 seconds) 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: Draw up and tighten your pelvic floor muscles as quickly as you can and then relax fully. **Repeat up to 20 times**

Try to do both of these exercises three to four times a day.



It is important to do this **without**:

- Clenching your jaw
- Holding your breath
- Excessively pulling in your tummy muscles
- Squeezing your inner thigh muscles
- Squeezing your buttocks.

Is there anything else I can do to help myself?

Don't forget to use your pelvic floor when you most need it – squeeze every time you cough, sneeze, lift or when you are holding on.

If you are unsure, speak to your GP who can refer to your local pelvic health team.

Useful sources of information

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/squeezy/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/womens-health/what-are-pelvic-floor-exercises/>

Female pelvic floor educational video: <https://youtu.be/Mu9WVtURYRQ>

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your symptoms please speak to your GP or midwife to get a referral to pelvic health physiotherapy.

Website: <https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/service/therapies/womens-and-mens-health-physiotherapy/>

Twitter: @SGHpelvicphysio

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer). **Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: THE_PFE_02 **Published:** October 2020 **Review date:** October 2022