

Kegel Exercises

What are Kegel exercises?

Pelvic floor muscle exercises, or Kegel exercises, can help to reduce urine leakage, particularly stress incontinence, and can strengthen the muscles supporting the pelvic organs. Kegel exercises were named after the doctor who developed them, Dr. Arnold Kegel.

How do I know which muscles to use?

The muscles that need strengthening are called the pubococcygeus, or PC, muscles. These muscles surround the urethral, vaginal, and rectal openings.

To find the muscle, insert one finger into the vagina. Squeeze the muscles around your finger. As you squeeze, your finger should feel pressure and your anus should contract inward and upward. Do not squeeze your stomach, leg, or buttock muscles. Also, avoid holding your breath while you exercise. Once you have found the right muscles, you do not need to insert your finger in the vagina to do the exercises. You can do the exercises while sitting (easier) or while lying down (harder).

You should not do these exercises while urinating, to stop the flow of urine. This can hurt the bladder.

Types of Kegel exercises:

Quick Kegels—Tighten and relax the PC muscle as rapidly as possible. Practice a series of 10 quick Kegels 4 times a day, every day. This exercises the *fast twitch* muscle fibers. Be sure that you let your pelvic muscles drop (relax) after each series.

Slow Kegels—Tighten the PC muscle. Hold it for a count of three, and then relax for a count of three. Practice a series of 10 slow Kegels 4 times a day, every day. Work up to holding for a count of 5, then 10. This exercises the *slow twitch* muscle fibers. Be sure that you let your pelvic muscles drop (relax) after each series.

When should I practice?

The exercises can be done anytime, anywhere. No one will notice that you are doing these exercises. Try to associate an activity with your Kegels, like during a TV commercial, at a red light, while washing dishes, or while talking on the phone.