

- Remember to relax your pelvic floor muscles fully when emptying your bladder and bowels.
- Straining to empty your bowels can stretch the pelvic floor and may lead to prolapse. Ensure your diet includes sufficient fibre and drink plenty of water to avoid constipation.
- Heavy lifting can put a strain on the pelvic floor. Try to avoid this where possible.
- You may wish to seek specific advice from your clinician if you are doing high impact exercise or using weights.
- Persistent coughing and sneezing can put strain on the pelvic floor muscles. Try to deal with the cause e.g. stop smoking, treat hay fever or asthma.
- Being overweight can give the muscles extra work to do. Getting to your ideal weight can lead to considerable improvement in your symptoms.

Contact information

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Clinician name:



**Norfolk Community
Health and Care**
NHS Trust

Pelvic floor muscle exercises for women

Information for patients

You can receive help with queries about NHS services from our
Patient Advice and Liaison Service

Telephone: **0800 088 4449**
Email: **pals@nchc.nhs.uk**



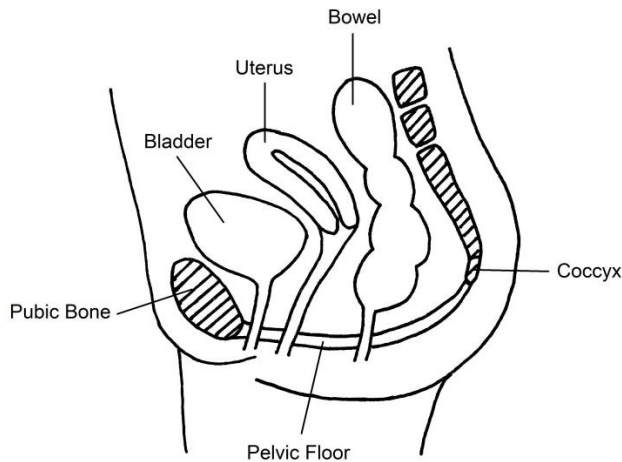
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LOOKING AFTER YOU LOCALLY

The pelvic floor

The pelvic floor muscles help support the pelvic organs and maintain continence. They attach to the back, front and sides of the base of the pelvis. Weak pelvic floor muscles may lead to pelvic organ prolapse, decreased satisfaction during intercourse, and/or bladder or bowel leakage.



Pelvic floor muscle exercises

To activate these muscles, imagine you are trying to stop yourself passing wind and your flow of urine. This should feel like a squeeze and lift sensation. Try not to tighten your buttocks, squeeze your legs together, or hold your breath.

Your exercise programme

Start each of these exercises with fully relaxed pelvic floor muscles.

1. Tighten your pelvic floor muscles and hold them in while you breathe. Hold this contraction for seconds.

Release and rest for seconds.

Repeat this contraction times.

These are your long holds.

2. Now tighten these muscles quickly and strongly, holding briefly, then fully releasing.

Repeat this times.

These are your short holds.

This is your exercise programme, which you need to repeat times a day. This will build your strength and endurance to help your muscles work more effectively. Do these while sitting / standing / lying.

- A muscle needs to be worked to fatigue to make it stronger. Make sure you work until you can do no more to achieve maximum effect.
- To progress the long holds, gradually increase the length of hold and/or the number of repetitions, up to a maximum of 10 x 10 second holds.

- To progress the short holds, gradually increase the number of repetitions, up to a maximum of 10.
- The aim is to progress your exercises to be able to do them while standing or even in walking.
- Quality is better than quantity, so remember to maintain relaxed breathing and good technique when performing your exercises.
- It can help to link your exercises to a particular time of day or activity, for example standing at the sink or sitting in an upright chair.
- Try using a mobile phone app or phone reminder to help you remember to do your exercises.
- Be patient - it can take several months to gain full pelvic floor muscle function.
- Even once you have gained full muscle function, these exercises should be continued 1-2 times per day.

Top tips

- Remember to contract your pelvic floor muscles before coughing, sneezing and heavy lifting. Tightening these muscles can also help reduce urgency to empty your bladder.