

Physiotherapy department

# Pelvic floor exercises for men

## Introduction

Some men experience leakage of urine when coughing, laughing, sneezing or exerting themselves. This is known as stress incontinence and can also occur following a prostatectomy operation. Often this is due to weakness or damage to the pelvic floor muscles.

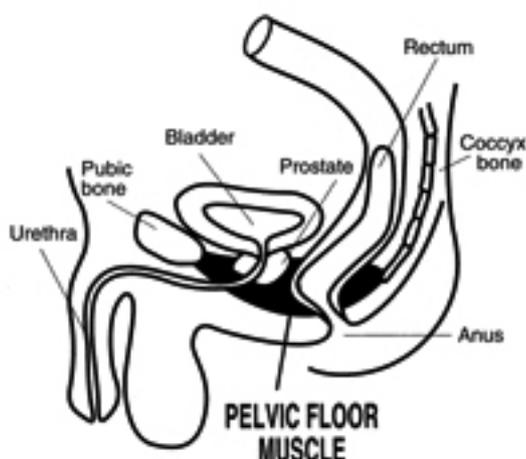
## What are the pelvic floor muscles?

These muscles stretch like a hammock from the tail bone at the back to the pubic bone at the front. A man's pelvic floor supports his bladder and the bowel. The urethra (bladder outlet) and the rectum (back passage) pass through the pelvic floor muscles. The pelvic floor muscles play an important role in bladder and bowel control.

You can improve control of your bladder and bowel by strengthening these muscles with pelvic floor exercises.

## How to identify the pelvic floor muscles

1. Sit or lie comfortably with the muscles of your thighs, buttocks and abdomen relaxed. Lift and squeeze the muscles around the back passage as if you are trying to stop yourself passing wind and the muscles at the front as if trying to stop yourself passing urine. Relax these muscles. Practice this movement until you feel sure you are exercising the correct muscles. Try not to squeeze your buttocks or tighten your thighs or tummy muscles.



2. Self-examination – if your technique is correct, each time you tighten your pelvic floor muscles you should feel the base of your penis move up slightly towards your abdomen.
3. Whilst passing urine, try to stop the flow mid-stream. This may be easier done sitting rather than standing. You should use this as a test rather than an exercise to check your progress. If you are exercising your pelvic floor muscles correctly, stopping the flow mid-stream should get easier. Do this test no more than **once** a week otherwise if done repeatedly it may interfere with normal bladder emptying.

## How to exercise the pelvic floor muscles

Now that you can feel the muscles working you are ready to start exercising them.

1. Lift and squeeze the pelvic floor muscles and hold the contraction for as long as you can
2. How long can you hold the contraction?  
(do not exceed 10 seconds)
3. Relax your pelvic floor muscles for 5 seconds in between each contraction.
4. Repeat the contraction and relaxation as many times as you can.
5. How many times can you repeat this?  
(Do not exceed 12 contractions)

Now you have established your **starting block**.

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To prevent leakage of urine when coughing or sneezing, your pelvic floor muscles need to react quickly.

Repeat the basic exercise above but do not hold the contraction.

How many quick contractions can you do?

Aim to repeat your **starting block** and **quick contractions** 4-5 times a day.

As a result of this muscle training your pelvic floor should get stronger and you can increase both your contraction time and the number of repetitions.

The most difficult part about doing your exercises is remembering to do them. Remind yourself by putting stickers in obvious places eg. fridge, etc.

Do your exercises well. The quality is important. Try to fit them into your daily routine and at regular intervals. A good time to do them is **after** you have emptied your bladder.

### ***While doing the exercises:***

- DO NOT hold your breath
- DO NOT push down instead of lifting and squeezing
- DO NOT tighten your tummy, buttocks or thighs

You can do your exercises in whatever position you find comfortable eg. sitting, standing, lying down.

Try to tighten your pelvic floor muscles if you know you are going to sneeze. This may be helpful in gaining control.

Try to avoid putting on weight. Obesity puts a strain on the pelvic floor muscles.

You should drink approximately 3-4 pints of liquid a day. Restricting your intake will not reduce your symptoms, in fact it could make matters worse. Also do not drink too much coffee or tea. Caffeine can irritate your bladder.

You should continue with these exercises until your pelvic floor muscles are working correctly. This may take 3-6 months, so be patient. After this time look after your pelvic floor by exercising it twice every day.

### **Further help**

If your problems persist despite following the exercises and advice, contact your GP who may be able to refer you to a continence advisor.

You may find it helpful to contact the:

Bladder and Bowel Foundation Helpline  
SATRA Innovation Park  
Rockingham Road  
Kettering  
Northants  
NN16 9JH

Helpline: **0845 345 0165**

General enquiries: **01536 533255**

Fax: **01536 533240**

**[www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org](http://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org)**

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact [patient.information@christie.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@christie.nhs.uk)

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.

Contact The Christie Hotline for  
urgent support and specialist advice  
**The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658**  
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

