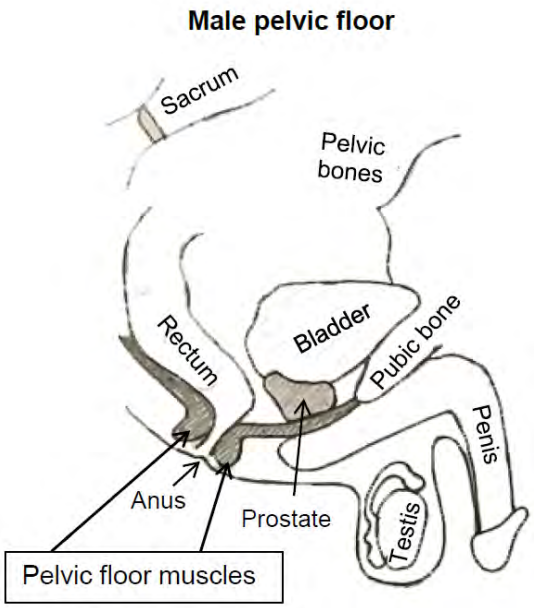
Pelvic floor strengthening and relaxation exercises for men

This leaflet explains where the pelvic floor muscles are and what they do. Learning to strengthen and relax the pelvic floor muscles may benefit you if you experience problems with control of urine (wee) or stools (poo). If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your physiotherapist.

What and where are the pelvic floor muscles?

The pelvic floor muscles form a 'sling' or 'hammock' that runs from your pubic bone at the front, to your coccyx (tail bone) at the back. These muscles help you **to keep control of urine and stool**. They also support your pelvic organs and are **important in normal sexual function**.



Pelvic floor dysfunction happens when the pelvic floor muscles either become **weakened or damaged,** or go into **spasm and become 'tight'**.

This can be as a result of many things including:

- The normal aging process.
- Being overweight.
- Having a long-term cough.
- Surgery or injury to the pelvic region.
- Cancer treatments such as radiotherapy to the pelvic region or chemotherapy.
- If you have had your prostate removed.
- Haemorrhoid (piles) removal surgery.

What are the symptoms of pelvic floor dysfunction?

Symptoms include:

- **Urinary incontinence**.
- **Bowel incontinence**.
- **Pain** – this can be in the pelvic area, in the perineum (the area between your scrotum and back passage), in the back passage itself or in the scrotum or testicles.
- Difficulty in getting or maintaining an erection.
- Premature or delayed ejaculation.
- Pain on ejaculation.

What can I do to help myself?

Both **pelvic floor muscle exercises** and **pelvic floor muscle relaxation** can help with pelvic floor dysfunction.

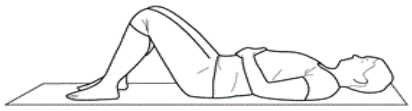
- **Strengthening** the pelvic floor muscles will help you to **improve control of urine and stool**. It will also contribute to **maintaining an erection** and will increase the sensation of pleasure during orgasm.
- **Learning to relax** the pelvic floor will help to **improve pain** caused by spasm or tension in the muscles, and will make **opening your bowels easier** and more comfortable. Relaxing the pelvic floor also allows blood flow to the genital region, and is **helpful in achieving an erection**.

Pelvic floor relaxation

Relaxation exercises should be done each time **before and after** you do your strengthening exercises. Pelvic floor muscles automatically begin to relax if you use a technique called “abdominal breathing”.

Abdominal breathing

Lie down with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor (crook lying).



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1. Focus on your breathing. Place one hand on your belly and feel how it rises when you take a deep breath in. Practise this for a few breaths.
2. Next, take a deep breath in, hold your breath and consciously relax your belly outwards and downwards.
3. As you blow the breath out, relax your pelvic floor muscles downwards. (It sometimes helps if you imagine your pelvic bones widening, or a flower bud opening.)
4. Take a moment to fully relax, then repeat the above steps up to 5 times.

Your pelvic floor strengthening exercises will not work as effectively if they are tense or tight.

Pelvic floor muscle exercises

Pelvic floor muscle exercises should be done 3-5 times per day.

It **may take at least 3-6 months** before you begin to see a significant improvement.

You need to do three types of exercises in each exercise session. Pelvic floor muscles, like all voluntary muscles, are made up of different types of muscle fibres, **slow ones** for endurance (like long distance running) and **fast ones** for strength (like sprinting).

1. Lie down in the crook lying position, or sit comfortably with your feet on the floor.
2. Place a finger on your perineum so that you can feel the contraction of your pelvic floor muscles when you do the exercises. Alternatively, you can do the exercise naked in front of a mirror. If you can make your penis bob up and down, you have the right muscles!

3. **Slow exercises:**
    - Squeeze the muscles that would stop you from passing urine and stool; or as if you are pulling your testicles up towards your belly button.
    - Hold the contraction for as long as you can, up to 12 seconds. Do not let the contraction 'melt away'; if it does you need to begin again and hold for less seconds until you are able to hold and release the contraction voluntarily.
    - Release the contraction, and rest for a few seconds.
    - Repeat 10 times. Remember to relax fully in between each contraction.
4. **Fast exercises:**
    - As above, but squeeze hard and hold the contraction for only 1 second.
    - Repeat 10 times, remembering to relax fully in between each contraction.
5. **Sub maximal or "half squeeze" exercises:**
    - Instead of squeezing as hard as you can, like you did for the previous two exercises, this time squeeze to about half your full strength. You will hold this squeeze for longer – up to 30 seconds. You only need to repeat this one 3 times.

Nobody should be able to see that you are doing the exercises, as you **should not be using any of the muscles in your bottom, thighs or abdomen**. In a lying position, your pelvic floor muscles are not working against gravity. You can do the exercises while sitting, but you might find them more difficult to begin with, so **progress to sitting once you can do them effectively while lying**.

Remember that it can take 3-6 months before you notice increased strength and control.

Helpful websites

https://thepogp.co.uk/Resources/122/pelvic_floor_muscle_exercises_for_men

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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