

Kegel Exercises

Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises

What are Kegel exercises?

Kegel exercises, named for the physician who developed them, are designed to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles. These muscles surround the openings of the urethra, vagina, and rectum.

When are Kegel exercises helpful?

- **Incontinence**—Kegels can build up or tighten the muscles that keep urine from leaking from the bladder.
- **Pregnancy**—Kegels can strengthen pelvic floor muscles for labor, delivery, and post-delivery bladder control.

Prolapse—Kegels also may help prevent or treat pelvic organ prolapse. Prolapse occurs when the pelvic floor muscles are weak and allow the uterus, bladder, urethra, small bowel, or rectum to bulge against or droop into the vagina. Symptoms do not always occur, but may include:

- frequent or urgent need to urinate
- involuntary passing of urine or stool
- constipation or pain when passing stool
- lower back pain
- pressure on the vagina, rectum, or pelvis
- a feeling that something is falling out of the vagina
- a feeling as if sitting on a small ball
- pain during intercourse
- vaginal discharge and bleeding
- a soft bulge of tissue that may protrude from the vagina

The information contained in this tear pad is not intended to replace the advice of a healthcare professional. If you have any questions, please contact a healthcare professional.

How do I know which muscles to exercise?

It is important to exercise the correct muscles, and there are several ways to locate them.

- Try to stop the flow of urine when you are using the toilet. Use this technique only to locate the correct muscles, not for exercising.
- Insert a finger into your vagina, and try to squeeze your finger.
- Pretend you are trying to keep from passing gas.

Regardless of the method you choose, concentrate on the sensations you experience while making note of which muscles you are using. Be sure that you do not tighten your abdominal, buttock, or thigh muscles.

How do I do Kegel exercises?

Once you know which muscles to exercise, you should begin by contracting them continuously for 5–10 seconds with a 10-second rest period between each contraction. An example schedule would be sets of 10, three to four times a day. Your healthcare professional may recommend a different exercise schedule.

It may be several weeks or months before you notice an improvement, and the exercises may need to be continued indefinitely. You can do your Kegel exercises anytime, anywhere: while driving, watching TV, reading, etc.

