

Patient Handout

Pelvic Muscle Exercises (Kegels)



When and Where Are These Exercises Done?

What Are Pelvic Muscle Exercises?

Pelvic muscles, like other muscles, can become weak. Pelvic muscle exercises, or Kegels, are exercises to strengthen weak muscles around the bladder.

How Are Pelvic Muscles Exercised?

To find the right muscles, imagine that you have eaten rich food that has caused you to have gas. The muscle that you use to hold back gas is the one you want to exercise.

You will be asked to do these exercises several times each day. Usually it takes about 10 minutes, 2 to 3 times a day to do the exercises. Your doctor will give you exact instructions about how many times you should do the exercises and the number of times per day.

You can practice these exercises anywhere and anytime. It is usually best to begin practicing them when lying on your bed. Once you have mastered them lying down, practice them sitting in a chair. Then advance to practicing them standing. Soon you will be able to do them anywhere.

What Are Common Mistakes?

Never use your stomach, legs, or buttock muscles. To find out if you are also contracting your stomach muscles, place your hand on your abdomen while you squeeze your pelvic muscle. If you feel your abdomen move, then you are also using these muscles. Avoid holding your breath. Inhale and exhale slowly while counting. In time, you will learn to practice effortlessly.



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When Will You Notice a Change?

After 4 to 6 weeks of following your prescribed exercise routine, you will begin to notice yourself having fewer urinary accidents.

After 3 months, you will see an even bigger difference. It may help to keep a diary of the times you practice your exercises and the times that you leak urine. This will give you a picture of the progress that you are making.

If you forget to do your exercises for several days, do not be discouraged. When you have realized you have forgotten, begin your program again as instructed. Do not try to make up for lost days by doing more exercises or you will have sore muscle.

For more information on The AGS Foundation for Health in Aging call 1-800-563-4916 or visit www.healthinaging.org.

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