

# KEGEL (PELVIC MUSCLE) EXERCISES

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## Background

- The pelvic muscles are an essential part of maintaining control of both urine and stool.
- These muscles commonly weaken with age, loss of estrogen at menopause and damage during pregnancy & childbirth
- Like other muscles, your pelvic muscles can be strengthened with regular exercise
  - This can decrease and sometimes eliminate uncontrolled loss of urine and stool.
- Also, like all muscles, pelvic muscle strengthening requires time, progressive increase in intensity and long-term commitment.
  - Beware- trying to do too much too soon may create overuse injury and muscle fatigue- as with any other muscle

## How to Begin

- Because your pelvic muscles rarely have conscious use, intentional contractions may initially feel very subtle
  - Exercising the wrong muscle groups such as the buttocks, abdomen and thighs is common.
- When first starting, lay on your bed with your back and head slightly elevated.
  - Important to empty your bladder before starting
  - Wear loose clothing
- To remind your mind how a muscle contraction feels, tighten then relax your fist
  - Concentrate on the difference in feeling
    - these will be the same sensations that you will have in your pelvic muscles when they are tightened and relaxed

## Identifying your Pelvic Muscles

- May begin by placing two fingers into your vagina.
  - When the correct muscles are contracted, you will feel a squeezing sensation

- Alternatively, sit on the toilet, start to urinate then attempt to stop the urine stream by contracting your pelvic muscles
  - Visualize the correct muscles by imagining that you are attempting to lift a marble or grape with your vagina.

### **The Exercise Regimen**

- Remember to begin slowly then build gradually to avoid muscle fatigue and damage
- Start with ten 10 second contractions
  - Important to allow thirty seconds of relaxation between each contraction
- Not unusual that, when beginning, your pelvic muscles will be too weak to hold a contraction for the full 10 seconds
  - Do not quickly relax then resume the contraction
  - Count whatever length of contraction you can hold as a full contraction
    - allow 30 seconds of relaxation before starting the next contraction
    - Remember, you are already building strength- it will get better
- Begin by doing one set of contractions in the morning then one in the evening
- Once you can hold all ten contractions comfortably for ten seconds, increase to fifteen contractions twice daily
  - Gradually build to thirty contractions two to three times daily

### **Maintenance**

- To be effective, Kegel exercises must be done every day
- As you progress and become more skilled, Kegel exercises may be done anytime and in any location
  - Stoplight, waiting room, watching TV, etc
- Once strengthened, pelvic muscles may be used to reduce or completely eliminate urine loss with stresses such as cough, sneeze and laugh
- They may also be used to deal with a sudden, strong urge to urinate
  - It is natural, when feeling an urge, to rush to the bathroom
    - However, this will increase the risk of urine loss by placing abdominal pressure on the bladder
      - Like squeezing a full balloon

- Instead of rushing, sit calmly and do three rapid, one to two second pelvic muscle contractions
  - This will usually break the bladder spasm and allow time for you to rise slowly and calmly walk to the bathroom
- Important to “Get obsessed & stay obsessed”- Hotel New Hampshire
- BEST OF LUCK!!

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