

Kegel Exercises - Self-Care

Definition

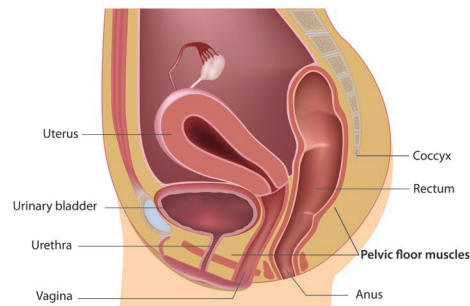
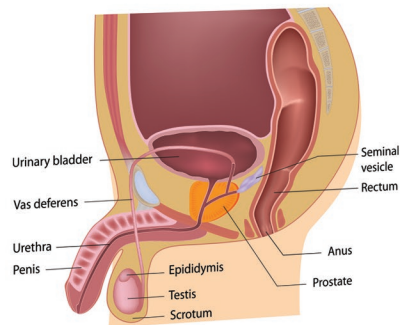
Kegel exercises can help make the muscles under the uterus, bladder, and bowel (large intestine) stronger. They can help both men and women who have problems with urine leakage or bowel control.

You may have these problems as you get older or if you gain weight, after pregnancy and childbirth, or after prostate surgery (men) or gynecologic (female) surgery. People who have brain and nerve disorders may also have problems with urine leakage or bowel control.

Kegel exercises can be done any time you are sitting or lying down. You can do them when you are eating, sitting at your desk, driving, and when you are resting or watching television.

Alternative Names

Pelvic muscle strengthening exercises; Pelvic floor exercises



How to Find the Right Muscles

A Kegel exercise is like pretending you have to urinate and then holding it. You relax and tighten the muscles that control urine flow. It's important to find the right muscles to tighten.

Next time you have to urinate, start to go and then stop. Feel the muscles in your vagina (for women), bladder, or anus get tight and move up. These are the pelvic floor muscles. If you feel them tighten, you've done the exercise right.

If you still are not sure you are tightening the right muscles:

- **Women:** Insert a finger into your vagina. Tighten the muscles as if you are holding in your urine, then let go. You should feel the muscles tighten and move up and down.
- **Men:** Insert a finger into your rectum. Tighten the muscles as if you are holding in your urine, then let go. You should feel the muscles tighten and move up and down.



Kegel Exercises

How to do Kegel Exercises

Once you know what the muscles are like, do Kegel exercises three times a day.

- Make sure your bladder is empty. Sit or lie down.
- Tighten the pelvic floor muscles as tight as you can and count to 6 to 8.
- Relax the muscles and count to 6 to 8.
- Repeat 10 times, three times a day (morning, afternoon, and evening).

Breathe deeply, and relax your body. You are doing these exercises to strengthen the muscles you are not tightening your thigh, buttock, or chest muscles.

After 4 to 6 weeks, you should notice improvement and have fewer symptoms. Continue the exercises, but do not overdo them. Overdoing them can cause straining when you urinate or have bowel movements.

