



# How to engage your pelvic floor

your whole woman guide



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# How to engage your Pelvic Floor

The pelvic floor plays a vital role in supporting your internal organs, maintaining continence, and contributing to overall core stability. Learning to properly engage and care for these muscles is essential for long-term health.

This guide provides a clear, step-by-step approach to understanding and exercising your pelvic floor.

## The Importance of Pelvic Floor Exercises

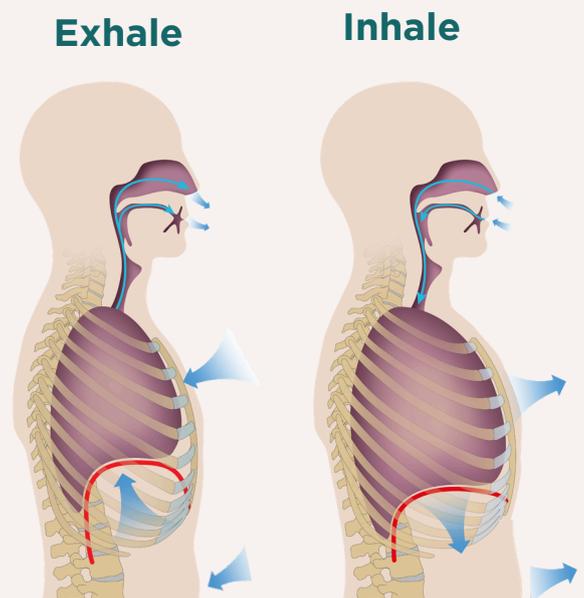
- Enhances bladder and bowel control
- Supports sexual health and comfort
- Improves core strength and posture
- Reduces and prevents incontinence

## Breathing Techniques: The Balloon Analogy

Effective breathing is fundamental to pelvic floor function and is the first thing to get right before starting pelvic floor exercises.

Consider from your shoulders down to your sit bones like a can and your lungs are like two balloons

- 1 Inhale:** Visualise the balloons gently expanding. Notice how your ribs, abdomen, and pelvic floor stretch and expand
- 2 Exhale:** Picture the balloons deflating as your pelvic floor gently lifts and contracts.
- 3 Relaxation:** Allow the pelvic floor to return to its natural resting position.



**Practice:** Perform 10 slow, controlled breaths, focusing on smooth, natural movement. This breathing pattern sets the foundation for effective pelvic floor engagement. Practice daily for at least 2 weeks and then reduce to 3 times weekly or use when needed as this breathing can support you when you feel stressed or overwhelmed.

## Identifying the Pelvic Floor

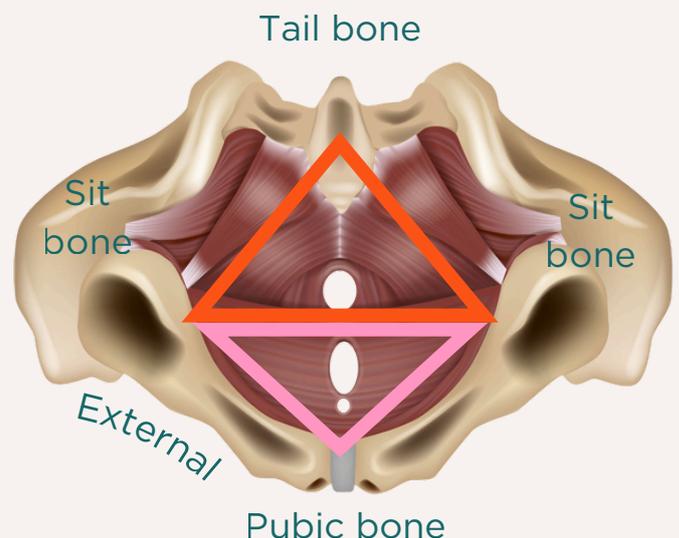
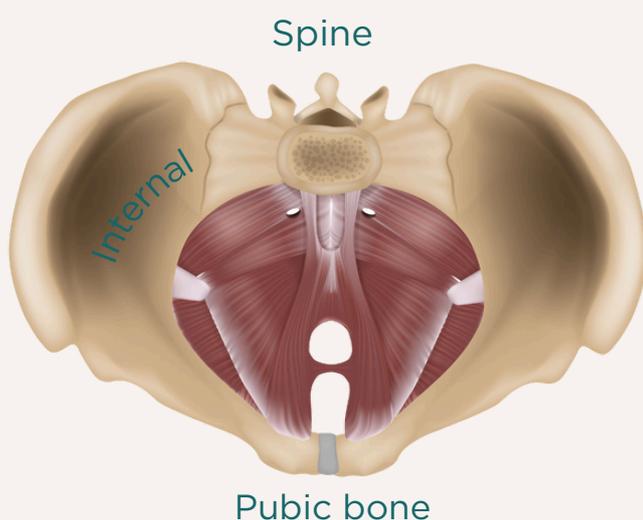
The pelvic floor consists of interconnected muscles, ligaments, fascia, blood vessels and nerves at the base of the pelvis, with close connections with the core muscles, glutes, hip rotators and inner thigh muscles

To do an isolated pelvic floor contraction you need to identify the front and the back part of the pelvic floor.

Pelvic floor mapping is really useful for your brain and helps build stronger connections and awareness. Sitting on your chair nice and straight and shift from side to side to feel your sit bones and then forward and backwards to feel your pubic bone and tailbone.

- Front Section:** Responsible for stopping urine flow and supporting the urethra and bladder.
- Back Section:** Engages to prevent the passage of gas and support bowel function.

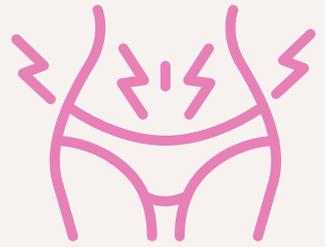
**Technique Tip:** To locate these muscles, imagine lifting a small object with your vagina for the front and preventing wind from escaping for the back. These sensations indicate proper engagement.



## Recognising Overactive Pelvic Floor Muscles

In many cases, pelvic floor muscles can become overactive, leading to tension and discomfort. Symptoms may include:

- Chronic pelvic pain
- Pain during sexual activity
- Difficulty initiating or completing urination
- Constipation or straining during bowel movements
- A sensation of heaviness or pressure in the pelvic area



**Important Note:** If you experience these symptoms, pelvic floor exercises such as Kegels may not be suitable. Instead, focus on relaxation techniques and seek guidance from a Pelvic Floor Specialist for a tailored management plan.

## How to do pelvic floor contractions (Kegels)

- **Adopt a Comfortable Position-** Sit, stand, or lie down on your side with knees slightly apart (use a cushion between your knees if lying down) Relax your thighs, buttocks, and abdomen. Breathe naturally to prepare.
- **Inhale to Expand-** Take a deep breath, allowing your ribs, abdomen, and pelvic floor to expand and stretch.
- **Exhale to Contract-** Exhale slowly while imagining your pelvic floor lifting upward and inward.
- Combine this motion with the sensation of stopping urine flow and stopping the passage of gas. This engages both the front and back sections simultaneously for a comprehensive contraction. (Please note- do not practice this when on the toilet as this can confuse you bladder if done repeatedly)
- **Relax to Resting Tone-** Complete your breath by allowing the pelvic floor to return to its natural, resting position.

**Progress to a weight bearing position such as standing for the most benefit**



# The Importance of Relaxation

Relaxing the pelvic floor is as crucial as contracting it, so we have healthy muscles that can lengthen and contract.

**Pro Tip:** Tell yourself to 'let go' after you contraction. You can also place a hand near your tailbone to observe its movement. It should shift inward during contraction and outward when relaxed.

If you cannot feel a relaxation then you will benefit from doing the breathing exercises longer and seeking support from a professional to help you feel this in your body. Doing contractions without ensuring your pelvic floor can relax may make your symptoms worse.

## Daily Exercise Routine

### Long Pelvic Floor Contractions (Endurance Holds)

**How to Do Them:** Inhale and exhale and slowly tighten your pelvic floor muscles (as above) hold the contraction for 5 seconds, then relax for 4 seconds.

**Repetitions:** Aim for 5-10 long holds, making sure to relax fully between each one.

**Purpose:** These exercises improve the endurance of your pelvic floor muscles-gradually build up by 1 second up to a max duration of 10 seconds.

**Remember:** Fully relaxing the muscles between contractions is essential. Over-tension or failing to relax can cause discomfort or exacerbate pelvic floor issues.

### Short Pelvic Floor Contractions (Quick Squeezes)

**How to Do Them:** Inhale and exhale and then quickly tighten and lift your pelvic floor muscles for 1 second, then release.

**Repetitions:** Perform 5 quick contractions, fully relaxing between each squeeze. Building up to 10 squeezes.

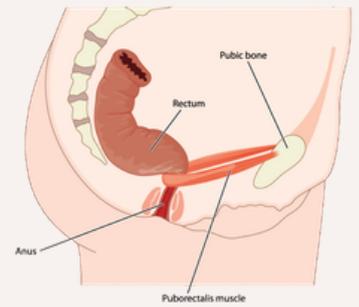
**Purpose:** These exercises train your muscles to react quickly and prevent bladder or bowel leakage during sudden movements or increase in intra-abdominal pressure.

**Perform this routine three times daily (morning, midday, evening). Once symptoms improve then reduce frequency.**

Ensure your approach includes a full body strengthening programme because this is a more functional way to train your pelvic floor.

# Toileting Mechanics

When we have difficulty letting our pelvic floor relax when we are on the toilet we can use our breath to help relax the puborectalis. A sling like muscle that creates a natural bend in our rectum. Use a stool or toilet step to keep your knees slightly higher than your hips to get yourself into the best position to go. and allow this muscle to lengthen- Think squatted position with a relaxed belly.



I use the ABCD acronym to help me remember the steps to better bowel motions:

## A- Awareness

Become aware of any tension you are holding in your body, how are you sitting, are you hovering? Pelvic floor muscles cannot relax if you are. Are you rushing? Distracted?

Bring awareness to your pelvic floor and visualise a bowl with a hole at the bottom. Now visualise that hole getting bigger.

## B- Breath

Keeping your belly relaxed, breathe in and gently direct your breath to your pelvic floor. Do not force it down or close off your airway.

## C- Co-contraction

If you need a bit of assistance to help empty your bladder or bowels, blow out through your mouth like you are blowing through a straw or making a 'Shhh' sound. This allows for the activation of your deep core muscles without you closing your airway.

## D - Diet

Your diet plays a key role in maintaining healthy bowel habits. Focus on a balance of soluble fibre and insoluble fibre:

- Soluble fibre (found in oats, beans, lentils, fruits, and vegetables) absorbs water, forming a gel-like substance that softens stool and makes it easier to pass.
- Insoluble fibre (found in whole grains, nuts, seeds, and the skins of fruits and vegetables) adds bulk to stool and helps it move through the digestive system.



Stay hydrated! Fibre needs water to do its job effectively.

By practicing ABCD, you can support healthier and more comfortable toileting habits while reducing unnecessary strain on your pelvic floor.

# Exercise

Most people are familiar with Kegel exercises for strengthening the pelvic floor, as they're commonly recommended. However, having a strong adaptable body can help a huge amount and there are movements that, when performed correctly, can activate your pelvic floor muscles even more effectively. These exercises also support overall hip and spinal function, which are crucial for optimal pelvic health.

Here are some excellent exercises to incorporate into your strength training routine:



**Cat/Cow 41% more PF activity**



**Bridge 56% more PF activity**



**Lunge 42% more PF activity**



**Squat 30% more PF activity**



**Donkey kick 30% more PF activity**

# A Whole Body Approach

A holistic approach to pelvic floor health goes far beyond “doing your Kegels.” The pelvic floor is part of an integrated system that relies on healthy breathing, posture, strength, mobility, and nervous system regulation. When the diaphragm, deep core, hips, and spine work together, pressure is managed efficiently and movement feels effortless.

This approach recognises that tension, weakness, and coordination all exist on a spectrum, and that emotional stress, pain, and lifestyle factors can influence how well the pelvic floor functions. By training the whole body and mind to move, breathe, and respond in balance, we support a pelvic floor that’s not just strong, but adaptable, responsive, and connected to the rest of us.

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