

Patient and Carer Information

Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises for Men

Introduction

The pelvic floor muscles play an important role in bladder and bowel control and have a role in maintaining sexual function. These muscles help to keep the bladder and bowel openings closed to prevent leakage of urine, faeces or wind. Functional pelvic floor muscles help to maintain a healthy bladder and bowel, an erection, and may prevent premature ejaculation.

Many men of all ages can experience problems with their urinary system, have difficulty controlling wind or leakage from the bowels and experience sexual dysfunction. Often this is due to either weakness of the muscles of the pelvic floor, or poor relaxation. These muscles play an important role in preventing these troublesome conditions.

It is also important to relax the pelvic floor muscles to allow the passage of urine and faeces out of the body.

What are the pelvic floor muscles?

The pelvic floor forms a sling of muscles, which are attached to the pubic bone at the front of the pelvis and the tailbone (coccyx), at the back. A man's pelvic floor supports the bladder and bowel.

Why do the pelvic floor muscle become or dysfunctional weak?

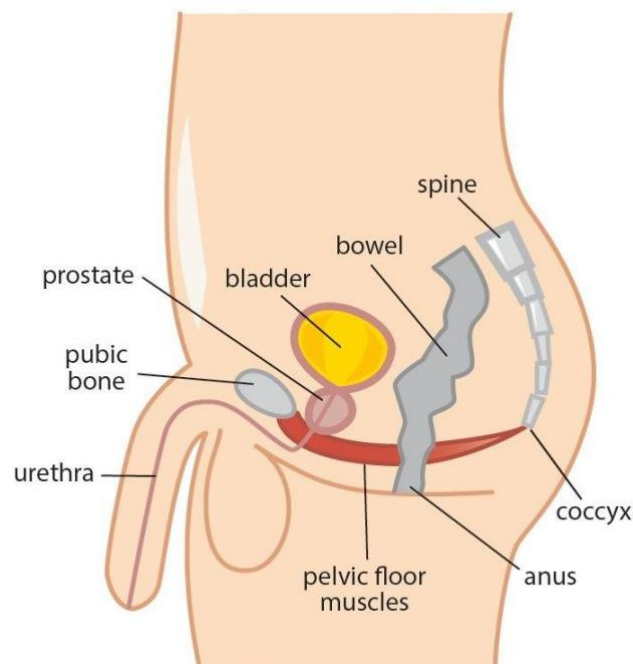
- **Prostate surgery**- TURP (transurethral resection of prostate) or prostatectomy may affect the pelvic floor muscle and nerve supply. Pelvic radiation may have the similar effects.
- **Constipation** - repeated straining to empty the bowels can lead to stretching of the pelvic floor muscles, nerve supply and supporting tissues. **Persistent heavy lifting** and a **chronic cough** can also have this same impact on the pelvic floor structures.
- **Lack of general fitness** or being overweight may lead to poor muscle tone and increase the strain on these muscles.
- **Medical conditions** such as multiple sclerosis (MS), stroke and diabetes may affect the nerve supply to the muscles leading to dysfunction
- **Perineum Injuries** (the area from the base of the penis to the back passage) by a prolonged pressure e.g. cycling for long periods or a direct blow to the area.

Common symptoms of Pelvic floor weakness are:

- Stress urinary leakage: leakage during activities such as coughing, laughing, sneezing or sports
- Bowel leakage: accidental leakage from the bowel of faeces, or difficulty in controlling wind
- Post-micturition dribble: leakage of a few drops of urine after you have finished passing urine
- Erectile dysfunction: not being able to gain or maintain an erection
- Premature ejaculation: ejaculation during sexual activity sooner than you/ your partner would like

The pelvic floor muscles have two types of muscle fibres in them. It's important to exercise both.

- **Slow twitch muscle fibres**, which have constant tone in them (even when you are asleep!). They support your bladder and bowel and help you to hold on when you can't get to the toilet immediately
- **Fast twitch muscle fibres**, which contract strongly and quickly to prevent leakage of urine when there is extra pressure on the bladder e.g., when you cough, sneeze, laugh or lift something heavy.



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Image: <https://www.continence.org.au/who-it-affects/men/male-pelvic-floor-muscles>

Learning to do a pelvic floor muscle exercise

1. Sit on a firm chair with your knees slightly apart,

TIGHTEN the ring of muscle around your back passage (anus) as though preventing a bowel movement or wind escaping.

LIFT the muscles up inside, **HOLD**, then... **RELAX** slowly.

2. In the same position, imagine you have to stop yourself passing urine.

TIGHTEN the muscles around your front. You should feel a slight lift of the scrotum as the base of your penis moves towards your abdomen.

LIFT them up inside, **HOLD**, then...**RELAX** slowly.

3. In the same position, put the two together.

Tighten the muscles around your back passage and front passage.

TOGETHER, LIFT them up inside you; **HOLD** then...**RELAX** slowly.

You may feel your lower tummy draw in as you pull in your pelvic floor, this is due to the fact that the muscle work together. However, it is important to keep your buttocks, and thighs relaxed and to breathe normally.

Exercise Programme

TIGHTEN your pelvic floor muscle as described:

Slow contractions: Hold for as many seconds as you can (up to a maximum of 10 seconds).

How long could you **HOLD** the contraction for? seconds **RELAX**

the contraction and **REST** for 4 seconds.

How many times could you repeat the contraction? repetitions (up to a maximum of 10)

Fast contractions: How many quick contractions can you do? Aim to increase this number (up to a maximum of 10)

It is important to do these exercises **at least 3 times a day**, gradually building up the amount of each exercise that you can do. It can take between 3-6 months to develop enough strength in the muscles to reduce your symptoms.

Tips to remember to do your exercises:

- NHS Squeezy app for men
- Before or after brushing teeth
- After passing urine
- First thing on a morning

These exercises may be used on their own or in conjunction with other strategies such as bladder training to improve control of urgency and frequency. If you would like further information or speak to your GP or specialist physiotherapist or continence nurse.

Contact details

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If you require this information in an alternative language or format (such as Braille, audiotape or large print), please ask the staff who are looking after you.