

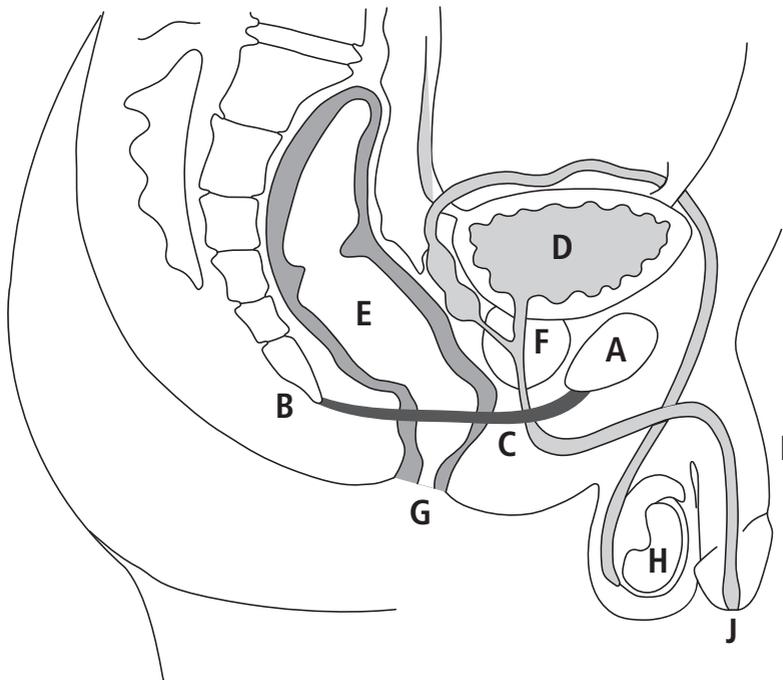
Keep high, stay dry

Pelvic floor exercises for men



What is the pelvic floor?

Layers of muscle stretch like a hammock from your pubic bone in the front to the bottom of your backbone (see diagram). These firm supportive muscles are called the pelvic floor. They help to hold your bladder and bowel in place, and to close the outlet tubes to your bladder and back passage.



- A Pubic bone
- B Bottom of backbone
- C Pelvic floor muscles
- D Bladder
- E Bowel
- F Prostate
- G Back passage
- H Scrotum
- I Penis
- J Urethra (outlet tube to the bladder)

How does the pelvic floor work?

The muscles of your pelvic floor are kept firm and slightly tense to stop leakage of urine from your bladder or faeces from your bowel. When you pass urine or empty your bowel, your pelvic floor muscles relax. Afterwards they tighten again to restore control.

Why should I exercise my pelvic floor?

Pelvic floor muscles may become weak following surgery, lack of exercise, as you get older, or if you put on weight. Weak muscles give you less control, and you may leak after you pass urine, exercise or when you cough, sneeze or laugh.

Pelvic floor exercises can strengthen these muscles so that they once again give support. This will help your bladder control and improve or stop leakage of urine. Like other muscles in your body, the more you use and exercise them the stronger your pelvic floor will become. To help you when you cough or sneeze, remember to tighten these muscles quickly.

Learning to do pelvic floor exercises

It is very important to do the exercises in the right way, and to check from time to time that you are doing them correctly.

- 1 Sit comfortably with your knees slightly apart. Now imagine that you are trying to stop yourself passing wind from your back passage. To do this you must squeeze this muscle as tightly as you can to feel the muscle move. Now let go. Your buttocks and legs should not move at all.
- 2 Imagine that you are emptying your bladder. Tighten the muscle at the front as if you are stopping the flow of urine. Now let go.
- 3 Now squeeze front and back muscles, and pull up the middle for as long as you can, then let go. You should feel your scrotum lift up and your penis dip down. Your buttocks and legs should not have moved at all.
- 4 Next time you go to the toilet to pass urine, try the 'stop test' about half way through emptying your bladder. Once you have stopped the flow of urine, relax again and allow your bladder to empty completely. You may only be able to slow down the stream. If the stream of urine speeds up when you try to do this exercise, you are squeezing the wrong muscles. Go back to number 1 and start again.

Do not do the 'stop test' every time you pass urine. Just do it once a week unless you are advised otherwise.

Practising your exercises

- 1 Slowly tighten and pull up your pelvic floor muscles as hard as you can for as long as possible. Now relax completely. These are called 'slow pull-ups'.

Question – for how many seconds can you tighten each 'slow pull-up'?
How many can you do?

Repeat until the muscles get tired.

- 2 When you have mastered the 'slow pull-ups', now pull up the muscles quickly and tightly and then relax immediately. These are called 'fast pull-ups'.

Question – how many can you do?

Repeat as many times as you can.

Do these two exercises as many times as you can throughout the day. As your muscles get stronger, you will find that you can hold for longer and do more exercises. It takes time for exercises to make muscles stronger. You are unlikely to notice improvement for several weeks – so stick at it! Remember you need to exercise regularly.

Tips to help you

- 1 Get into the habit of doing your exercises every day – every time you read the paper, answer the phone, touch water or watch Tv, whatever you do regularly.
- 2 Do the 'stop test' weekly when passing urine. Stopping your urine should get faster and easier.
- 3 Use the pelvic floor when you are afraid you might leak – pull up quickly and hold the muscles before you sneeze or lift something heavy. Your control should gradually improve.
- 4 Try to drink 6-9 cups of water, squash, fruit juice, tea or coffee every day (1-1.5 litres), as this helps your bladder and bowels. Don't get into the habit of going to the toilet 'just in case'. Go only when your bladder is full.

- 5 Avoid constipation. A healthy diet should include fibre and drinks. Straining to open your bowels may weaken your pelvic floor.
- 6 Extra weight puts extra strain on your pelvic floor. If you are overweight, try to lose weight. Your GP can offer support and advice.

Pelvic floor exercises are for life.

Any questions?

If so, ask your doctor, practice/district or urology nurse, health visitor, continence advisor or physiotherapist for help.

You might see some improvement in a few weeks but be patient, it may take a few months.

Useful contacts

Colorectal Nurse Specialists

Clare Ferris	01872 252693
Candy Coombe	
Chrissie Bevins	

Stoma Nurses

Una Goldstein	01872 252700
Jan Beard	
Adam Pearson	
Debbie Congreve	
Louise Adcock	
Meg Tremayne	
Wendy Parke	

Urology Nurse Specialists

Debbie Victor	01872 253143
Wendy Meyers	
Lisa Shephard	

Radiotherapy Support Radiographers

Linda Thorpe	01872 258340
Liz Telling	

Adapted with permission from Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust.

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