

Antenatal pelvic floor exercises



Obstetrics & Gynaecology

patient**information**



The Rotherham
NHS Foundation Trust

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Hearing about your experience of our services is very important as it means we can pass compliments on to our staff and make improvements where necessary. Tell us what you think by emailing us at: your.experience@nhs.net

Slovak

Slovensky

Ak vy alebo niekto koho poznáte potrebujete pomoc pri pochopení alebo čítaní tohto dokumentu, prosím kontaktujte nás na vyššie uvedenom čísle alebo nám pošlite e-mail.

Kurdish Sorani

كوردی سۆرانی

نەگەر تۆ یان کەسێک کە تۆ دەبناسی پێویستی بەیارمەتی هەبێت یۆ نەو دی لەم بەلگەنامە بە تێبگات یان بێخوێنتێتەو، تکایە پەیوەندیمان پێوە بکە لەسەر ناو ژمارەییە سەرەوددا یان بەو نێمەیلە.

Arabic

عربی

إذا كنت انت أو أي شخص تعرفه بحاجة إلى مساعدة لفهم أو قراءة هذه الوثيقة، الرجاء الاتصال على الرقم اعلاه، أو مراسلتنا عبر البريد الإلكتروني

Urdu

اُردو

اگر آپ یا آپ کے جاننے والے کسی شخص کو اس دستاویز کو سمجھنے یا پڑھنے کیلئے مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا نمبر پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں یا ہمیں ای میل کریں۔

Farsi

فارسی

اگر جناب عالی یا شخص دیگری که شما اورا می شناسید برای خواندن یا فهمیدن این مدارک نیاز به کمک دارد لطفاً با ما بوسیله شماره بالا یا ایمیل تماس حاصل فرمایید.

If you require this document in another language, large print, braille, audio or easyread format, please ask our healthcare providers*

*Note to healthcare providers:

Translated / easyread healthcare information can be sourced via the **Easyread websites** listed at the back of this leaflet or via contacting our translation service which can be accessed through the Hub.

Introduction

Your Midwife will have stressed the importance of pelvic floor exercises during your pregnancy, but these exercises are important throughout life, not just in pregnancy and after delivery. When done properly and regularly, pelvic floor muscles will improve the strength of the pelvic floor.

Strong pelvic floor muscles help you to:

- Have an easier birth
- Relieve constipation
- Help prevent the embarrassment of passing urine when you laugh or cough
- Improve your sex life

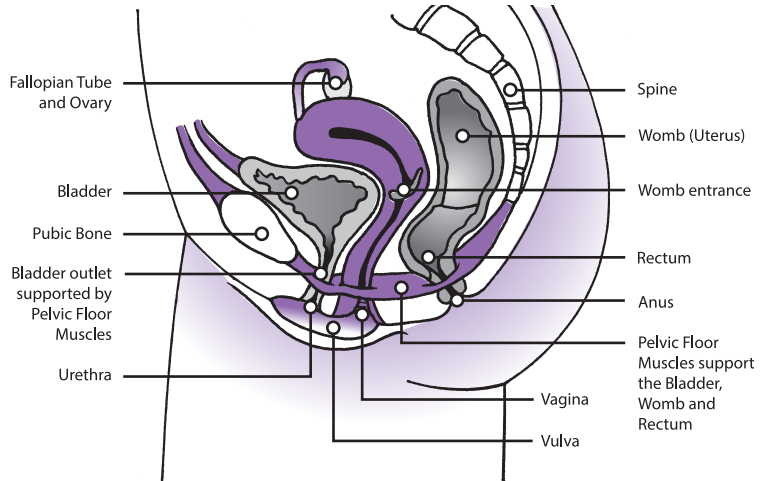
Pelvic floor muscles

The pelvic floor muscles are a group of muscles which run from the pubic bone to the base of the spine; they are stretched like a hammock.

These muscles:

- Provide support for the pelvic organs, the intestines, bladder, uterus and baby
- They help to control the bladder and bowel, they close the urethra (bladder outlet) and back passage (anus)
- They are important in sexual function
- They assist in childbirth
- Help to stabilize the spine

Diagram of pelvic floor muscles



How the pelvic floor muscles work

The pelvic floor muscles are kept firm and slightly tense to prevent leakage of urine, wind and faeces from the bowel.

The muscles relax when you pass urine or have a bowel movement, tightening afterwards so retaining control. Weak muscles means less control.

The pelvic floor muscles are also important to help increase sexual awareness for both partners during sexual intercourse.

Effects of pregnancy and childbirth

During pregnancy, a hormone relaxin is released throughout the body. It softens the tissues, allowing the body to expand as the baby grows. It also allows the pelvic floor to stretch wide as you give birth.

The softening effect of the relaxin and the pressure from the increasing weight of the baby make it difficult for the pelvic floor muscles to keep the pelvic organs in their correct position. The pelvic floor muscles and ligaments are stretched at birth.

Why do pelvic floor muscles not work properly

The muscles can be damaged:

- During pregnancy
- After childbirth
- Due to raised BMI

How will exercising these muscles help

- Exercising strengthens the muscles to improve support
- Improve bladder and bowel control to prevent leakage
- Being more aware of them helps you to relax them during childbirth, so helps during delivery
- Reduces constipation
- Exercising after birth will help to regain the strength and may help to ease perineal pain
- May also help to preventing prolapse in later life
- **Pelvic floor exercises are for life**

Identifying the pelvic floor muscles

In order to identify the pelvic floor muscles you need to imagine you are trying to stop yourself from passing urine and wind.

The feeling is of 'lift and squeeze', closing and drawing up of the front and back passages at the same time should be exercising the pelvic floor muscles.

To start with, you will need to concentrate.

How to check you are doing the exercises correctly

- Insert your fingers into the vagina, tighten the pelvic floor muscles, you should feel the muscles move around your fingers
- During sex, try to exercise the pelvic floor, ask your partner if he can feel the muscles tightening
- Check with a mirror, the skin between the anus and vagina (perineum) should move away from the mirror
- You can stop yourself passing urine mid flow with the pelvic floor muscles **but** you must only try this once and make sure you empty the bladder completely
- It is important that you use the correct muscles, specialist continence nurses and specialist physiotherapists can help

Antenatal pelvic floor exercises

Try not to

- Squeeze your buttocks
- Hold your breath
- Bring your knee's together
- Lift your shoulders, eyebrows or toes

How often do I need to do pelvic floor exercise?

- Like any exercise it takes time to strengthen the muscles. Persevere and do the exercises regularly
- It is recommended that pelvic floor exercises are done daily for at least three months, then a few times a week for maintenance
- Use a trigger to remind you to do your exercises, washing up, a phone ringing, cooking
- You may find downloading the NHS Squeezy app onto your phone a good way of remembering to do your exercises.
- Don't forget to use the pelvic floor when you most need it, squeeze every time you cough or sneeze.

Antenatal pelvic floor exercises

Exercises

- Aim to do a mixture of fast and slow 'lifts'
- Repeat 5 to 6 times gradually increasing to 10
- Sitting with your feet flat on the floor, or lying down to start with. As you get stronger you may want to progress to standing.
- Gradually increase holding time to 10 seconds
- Repeat 3 to 4 times a day

Slow exercises

- Close and draw up the muscles around your back passage, as if you are stopping yourself from passing wind (don't tighten your buttocks)
- Close and draw up the muscles around your vagina and urethra, as though trying to stop the flow of urine
- Hold to a count of 5 (if this is difficult, hold for 2 then 3, gradually increasing to 5) breathe normally throughout. When you can feel the hold and relax you can hold for 5 seconds
- Slowly relax and let go

Fast exercises

- As before draw up the pelvic floor muscles
- Slowly relax and let go
- Ensure to fully relax between each contraction

Remember

**Pelvic floor muscle exercises are for life.
They should become something you just do!**

For further information or advice please contact:

Department of Physiotherapy

Telephone 01709 424400

Department of Urology

Telephone 01709 426322

How to contact us

Department of Physiotherapy

Telephone 01709 424400

Department of Urology

Telephone 01709 426322

Switchboard

Telephone 01709 820000

Useful contact numbers

**If it's not an emergency,
please consider using a
Pharmacy or call NHS 111
before going to A&E.**

NHS 111 Service

Telephone 111

Health Info

Telephone 01709 427190

Stop Smoking Service

Telephone 01709 422444

UECC (A&E)

Telephone 01709 424455

**For GP out of hours,
contact your surgery**

Useful websites

www.therotherhamft.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.gov.uk

www.patient.co.uk

POGP (thepogp.co.uk)

Easyread websites

www.easyhealth.org.uk

www.friendlyresources.org.uk

www.easy-read-online.co.uk

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If you have any comments
or concerns about the services
we have provided please
let us know, or alternatively
you can contact the
Patient Experience Team.

Patient Experience Team

D Level

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