

Pelvic Exercises for Urinary Incontinence

Leaking urine, also called urinary incontinence, may seem embarrassing.

But it's a common problem, especially for older adults.

And lots of times it happens, at least in part, because of weak pelvic floor muscles.

But here's the good news.

Making pelvic floor muscles stronger can help to stop that problem, or at least reduce how often it happens.

Your pelvic floor muscles work like a hammock to support the organs in your lower belly like your bladder, your colon, and, if you have one, your uterus.

The pelvic floor muscles also help control the flow of urine.

So if they're not strong enough, urine can leak out.

Luckily, the pelvic floor muscles are like other muscles: You can make them stronger with exercise.

Pelvic floor exercises, also called Kegels, can help both women and men who have urinary incontinence.

Pelvic floor exercises are easy to do, and once you learn how, you can do them anywhere.

But first, you need to find the right muscles.

Think about the muscles you'd use if you were trying not to pass gas, or if you were trying to stop the flow of urine.

When using these muscles, you should feel a tightening in your anus and urethra.

Those are the muscles you want to use.

To try doing pelvic floor exercises, sit or lie down.

Don't do them while you urinate—over time, that could hurt your bladder.

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But imagine tightening the muscles that would stop your urine flow.

Now, tighten those same muscles.

If your belly, legs, or buttocks tighten, you're not using the right muscles.

Try again.

Squeeze the muscles and hold for 3 seconds.

Then relax for 5 to 10 seconds.

Repeat that sequence, squeezing and relaxing, 10 times in a row.

Try to do these 10 squeezes 3 to 8 times a day, and as the muscles get stronger, see if you can hold it longer.

Try to work up to squeezing for 10 seconds.

You can always talk to your doctor if you're still not sure that you're using the correct muscles.

And remember, these exercises shouldn't be painful.

If they are, talk to your doctor.

Also talk to your doctor if you don't notice less leaking after you do the exercises for a few months.

You may need other treatment.

It takes time to strengthen the pelvic muscles, so it may be several weeks or a few months before you notice any changes.

If you find these exercises are helpful, you may want to keep doing them as part of your ongoing wellness routine.