

What do we mean by pelvic health?

Pelvic health is about taking care of a part of your body that some might find embarrassing to talk about. It's making sure that your pelvic organs (bladder, bowel, womb) and their support systems (pelvic floor muscles and pelvic ligaments) are working as they should.

To sum it up, it describes the state of health, illness, or injury in the pelvic area. It's not just about treating problems when they come up (though that is important), but making sure, for your wellbeing, that your pelvic health is in the best possible shape now and for the future.

Please use the following top tips to help you look after your pelvic health, now and for the rest of your life!

TOP TIP #1

How to create new habits.

This can be challenging. Make it easier by deciding what, when, where and why you want to create a habit. E.g., I will start with 5 minutes of breathing and stretches when I wake up, whilst I'm still in bed, to start the day off well.

Things that can help:

- Habit stacking: pair a new habit that you want to start alongside or after a habit you already do.
- Make it easy: Start small and build over time.
- Make it obvious, use reminders like post-it notes.
- Celebrate success: This needs to feel like a treat that is in-keeping with your new habit or goal.

This resource can help you get started:
www.nhs.uk/better-health/



TOP TIP #2

Drink lots of water to keep yourself hydrated.

Try and drink 6-8 glasses of water a day. If you don't drink enough, your poo can become difficult to pass and it can irritate your bladder.

Did you know, constipation can be a cause of pelvic floor problems. If you experience chronic constipation, there's a chance that you may negatively impact your pelvic floor muscles.



TOP TIP #3

Try to limit how much caffeine and alcohol you drink.

Caffeine and alcohol are diuretics meaning they cause your body to produce urine faster, making you need the toilet more, and more urgently. As a result people often tell us they have to know where the nearest toilets are when they go out.

They can also irritate your urethra and bladder. This irritation can weaken your pelvic floor.



TOP TIP #4

Eat your five a day!

Eating enough fruit and veggies, and avoiding too many processed foods and sugar is important for the health of our pelvic organs and muscles. Your choice of foods and drinks play a very important part in your pelvic health.

Having issues? Try keeping a food and drink diary to find out what irritates your bowel or bladder. You may be surprised to find the links!



TOP TIP #5

Learn to belly breathe.

Belly breathing (diaphragmatic or 360-degree breathing) can help you feel calm, reduce tension in your muscles (including pelvic floor), help you poo with ease, and manage the pressures going through your tummy (this can limit or stop any leaking of wee or feelings of dragging or heaviness).

Set up:

1. You can breathe in any position but lying down is easiest.
2. Relax your belly and shoulders.
3. Try and breathe through your nose if possible.

How to:

1. Have one hand on your belly and the other on your chest.
2. Breathe in slowly through your nose and picture your belly filling with air. Your hand on your belly will move outwards.
3. Breathe out through your nose and feel your belly softly move back inwards.

TOP TIP #6

Don't strain when you poo, and consider using a footstool.

Placing your feet on a stool or toddler step will bring you into a squatting position and will help you to poo more comfortably and without straining.

Avoid straining (as this can weaken your pelvic floor muscles over time), instead relax your belly and use your belly breathing. Try making a "Shhhh" sound when you breathe out then at the end of that breath change to a "Juu" sound.

This resource can help you get started:
<https://docreader.reciteme.com/doc/view/id/6262d010c9826#page-4>



TOP TIP #7

Create and stick to a regular pelvic floor exercise routine.

Making time to do your pelvic floor exercises every day is the best way to keep your pelvic floor healthy. And it is easier than you think!

Did you know you can do these at any time, in any position?

For more information:
https://thepogp.co.uk/patients/pelvic_health_advice/pelvic_floor_muscles.aspx



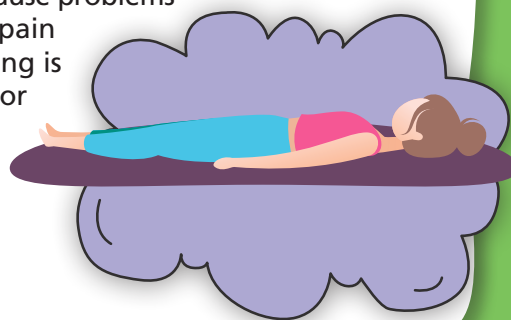
TOP TIP #8

Learn to relax your pelvic floor.

It is very important to be able to fully relax your pelvic floor muscles as well as being able to contract them.

If these muscles are too tight it can cause problems like bladder pain, leaking wee and pain during sex. Using your belly breathing is a great way to allow your pelvic floor muscles to relax.

For more ways to help, visit:
<https://squeezezyapp.com/what-if-i-have-pelvic-pain-2/>



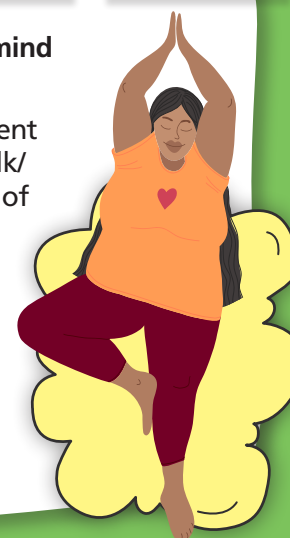
TOP TIP #9

All movement counts!

Movement and exercise are beneficial for long-term mind and body health.

Try movement snacking! 10-minute chunks of movement all add up, e.g., dancing round your kitchen, short walk/run, get off the bus early. Aim to achieve 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week. Meaning, your heart rate will be raised but you can still talk.

The body needs variety of movement to help to keep it happy. These resources can help guide you:
www.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/exercise-physical-activity
www.activepregnancyfoundation.org/findyouractive



WE CAN GIVE YOU THE HELP AND SUPPORT YOU NEED

Pregnant or up to one year after birth? If you are having pelvic health issues, you don't have to just live with it. Whether your symptoms can be managed at home (using online self-help tools) or you need specialist treatment, tailored advice and care is available to you.



Simply scan the QR Code, or visit www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/maternity-services/maternity-support/north-central-london-perinatal-pelvic-health-service for Perinatal Pelvic Health Services across North Central London. Alternatively, speak to your midwife or healthcare professional.



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TOP TIPS FOR GOOD PELVIC HEALTH

How to create good habits for your lifelong pelvic health.