



**What and where is
your pelvic floor?**

**Pelvic floor
muscle training.**

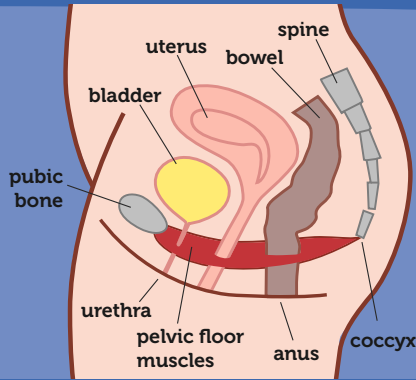
DON'T IGNORE YOUR PELVIC FLOOR

**Pelvic floor
exercise
programme.**

**How to get help
and find more
information.**

During pregnancy and after birth it is important to take care of your pelvic floor. The best way to do that is to begin a pelvic floor exercise routine. This leaflet will show you how to start, and maintain, a routine that will help you now and for the rest of your life.

WHAT IS YOUR PELVIC FLOOR?



The pelvic floor muscles are a group of muscles that sit inside the pelvis. They attach from the pubic bone at the front, to the coccyx bone at the back, forming the floor of your pelvis. The functions of the pelvic floor muscles are:

- Control – they help you to control wee, wind and poo.
- Support – they act like a hammock to support your pelvic organs (bladder, uterus and bowel).
- Sexual function – they can help improve sex by increasing your sensation and orgasm.
- Stability - they help to manage forces going through the pelvis.

PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING:

The correct way to contract your pelvic floor muscles is tighten from back to front as if you're trying to stop wind and wee.

There are various different cues you can try to initiate a contraction if thinking about wind and wee doesn't work for you. The best cue is the one that lets you feel the muscles working most.

You can try imagining:

- Stopping wind.
- Stopping wee (don't actually stop the flow of urine).
- A lift that is on the ground floor and needs to travel up to the top floor.
- A blueberry at the entrance to the vagina and you are trying to draw it up and in.
- An escalator, tailbone is at the bottom and you're travelling up the escalator to the pubic bone.



RECOMMENDED ROUTINE:

REMEMBER!

It can take many months (3-6+ months) to see improvements. Keep going with it!

SLOW



Slow holds (endurance):

- Hold for up to 8-12 seconds.
- Relax fully and repeat up to 10 times.

Fast contractions:

- 1 second contraction.
- 1 second relaxation (or slow relaxation if difficult).
- Repeat up to 10 times.

FAST



REPEAT



- 3 x day until asymptomatic.
- 1 x day or 3-4 x week for life if asymptomatic.

ENGAGE



Consciously engage pelvic floor muscles before any activity that provokes symptoms. E.g. cough/laugh/sneeze.

For success you need to meet your body where it's at. It might take time to work up to the recommended amount.

- Contract/engage your pelvic floor.
- How long can you hold for whilst still breathing? E.g. 2 seconds, 5 seconds? This is your starting point.

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

Your body can 'cheat' when you're trying hard to do something new. Pay attention to what the rest of your muscles are doing, make sure you are not:

- Holding your breath.
- Squeezing your legs or buttocks.
- Gripping with your belly.
- Not fully relaxing your pelvic floor (which is as important as how well you can contract your pelvic floor).



WHAT POSITION SHOULD I DO THEM IN?

Lying/
side lie.

Sitting.

Standing.

Moving.

You need to find your starting position, where you can feel the muscles work without any 'cheats' happening. This might mean you start lying down. As soon as you are able to, you need to progress to completing your exercises in more functional positions...this is likely when you will start to see improvements in any symptoms you may have.

How to check: Use a hand held mirror and have a look. You should see your back passage (anus) tightening when you do a pelvic floor exercise.

RESOURCES TO HELP:



https://thepogp.co.uk/patients/pelvic_health_advice/pelvic_floor_muscles.aspx



<https://squeezezyapp.com/>

Pelvic floor exercises are important to do to optimise your life long pelvic health, whether you have any current symptoms or not. For more information scan the QR Code, or visit **www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/maternity-services/maternity-support/north-central-london-perinatal-pelvic-health-service**. Alternatively, speak to your midwife or healthcare professional.

