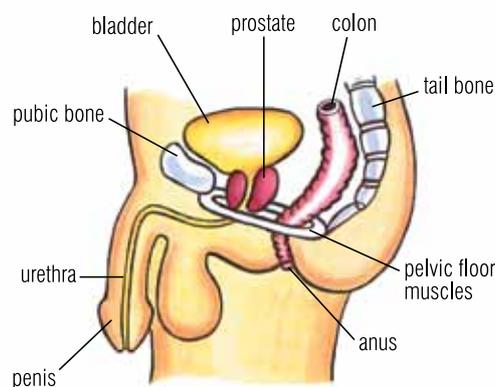




WHAT ARE THE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES?

The floor of the pelvis is made up of layers of muscle and other tissues. These layers stretch like a hammock from the tailbone at the back, to the pubic bone in front.

A man's pelvic floor muscles support his bladder and bowel (colon). The urine tube and the back passage pass through the pelvic floor muscles. Your pelvic floor muscles help you to control your bladder and bowel. They also help sexual function. It is vital to keep your pelvic floor muscles strong.



WHY SHOULD I DO PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING?

Men of all ages need to have strong pelvic floor muscles.

Pelvic floor muscles can be made weaker by:

- surgery for bladder or bowel problems;
- constipation;
- being overweight;
- heavy lifting;
- coughing that goes on for a long time (such as smoker's cough, bronchitis or asthma); or
- not being fit.

Men with stress incontinence – that is, men who wet themselves when they cough, sneeze or are active – will find pelvic floor muscle training can help in getting over this problem.

Pelvic floor muscle training may also be of use for men who have an urgent need to pass urine more often (called urge incontinence).

Men who have problems with bowel control might find pelvic floor muscle training can help the muscle that closes the back passage. This muscle is one of the pelvic floor muscles.

PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING FOR MEN

WHERE ARE MY PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES?

The first thing to do is to find out which muscles you need to train.

1. Sit or lie down with the muscles of your thighs and buttocks relaxed. It may be helpful to use a hand mirror to watch your pelvic floor muscles as they pull up.
2. Squeeze the ring of muscle around the back passage as if you are trying to stop passing wind. Now relax this muscle. Squeeze and let go a couple of times until you are sure you have found the right muscles. Try not to squeeze your buttocks.
3. When you go to the toilet to empty your bladder, try to stop the stream of urine, then start it again. Do this to learn which muscles are the right ones to use - but only once a week. Your bladder may not empty the way it should if you stop and start your stream more often than that.
4. Stand sideways in front of a mirror with no clothes on. As you pull in your pelvic floor muscles strongly and hold them, you should see your penis draw in and your scrotum lift up.

If you don't feel a distinct "squeeze and lift" of your pelvic floor muscles, or if you can't slow your stream of urine as talked about in Point 3, or you do not see any lift of your scrotum and penis as talked about in Point 4, ask for help from your doctor, physiotherapist, or continence nurse. They will help you to get your pelvic floor muscles working right. Men with very weak pelvic floor muscles can benefit from pelvic floor muscle training

HOW DO I DO PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING?

Now that you can feel the muscles working, you can:

- Squeeze and draw in the muscles around your urine tube and back passage at the same time. Lift them UP inside. You should have a sense of "lift" each time you squeeze your pelvic floor muscles. Try to hold them strong and tight as you count to 8. Now, let them go and relax. You should have a distinct feeling of "letting go".
- Repeat (squeeze and lift) and let go. It is best to rest for about 8 seconds in between each lift up of the muscles. If you can't hold for 8, just hold for as long as you can.
- Repeat this "squeeze and lift" as many times as you can, up to a limit of 8 to 12 squeezes.
- Try to do three sets of 8 to 12 squeezes each, with a rest in between.
- Do this whole training plan (three sets of 8 to 12 squeezes) every day while lying down, sitting or standing.



PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING FOR MEN

While doing pelvic floor muscle training:

- keep breathing;
- only squeeze and lift;
- do NOT tighten your buttocks; and
- keep your thighs relaxed.

DO YOUR PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING WELL

Fewer good squeezes are better than a lot of half hearted ones! If you are not sure that you are doing the squeezes right, or if you do not see a change in symptoms after 3 months, ask for help from your doctor, physiotherapist, or continence nurse.

MAKE THE TRAINING PART OF YOUR DAILY LIFE

Once you have learnt how to do pelvic floor muscle squeezes, you should do them. Every day is best. You should give each set your full focus. Make a regular time to do your pelvic floor muscle squeezes. This might be after going to the toilet, when having a drink, or when lying in bed.

Other things you can do to help your pelvic floor muscles:

- Share the lifting of heavy loads.
- Eat fruit and vegetables and drink 6 to 8 glasses of water daily.
- Don't strain when using your bowels.
- Ask your doctor about hay fever, asthma and bronchitis to ease sneezing and coughing.
- Keep your weight within the right range for your height and age.





PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING FOR MEN

SEEK HELP

If you do nothing it won't go away. And it might get worse.

Every bladder or bowel control problem, no matter how small, needs to be looked after. There is almost always something that can be done to help.

Call Expert Advisors on the National Continence Helpline for free:

- information;
- advice; and
- leaflets.

On FREECALL 1800 33 00 66 (8 am to 8 pm Monday to Friday), or

Visit the website: www.bladderbowel.gov.au

The Helpline is funded under the Commonwealth Government's National Continence Management Strategy and managed by the Continence Foundation of Australia

* Calls from mobile telephones are charged at applicable rates.

