



An tOspidéal Náisiúnta Máithreachais
The National Maternity Hospital

Physiotherapy Department

Pelvic Floor Muscle Strengthening



What is the Pelvic Floor?

The pelvic floor is a sling of muscles stretching from the pubic bone to the tailbone. It supports the bladder, bowel, and womb, helps maintain continence, contributes to sexual function, and provides core stability

Why Strengthen It?

Pregnancy, childbirth, and aging can weaken these muscles.

Strengthening helps prevent leaks (incontinence), supports organs, and improves pelvic stability and sexual function



Visit our website: www.nmh.ie

Pelvic Floor Exercises

Before You Start: Finding the Muscle

Your pelvic floor muscles are internal and do not include:

- Tummy, thighs, calves, buttocks, or eyebrows!

You should feel a lift inward and upward

Do not:

- Clench buttocks
- Hold your breath
- Squeeze legs

Different cues work for different people, experiment with what works best for you



Technique

Step 1: Contracting Your Pelvic Floor

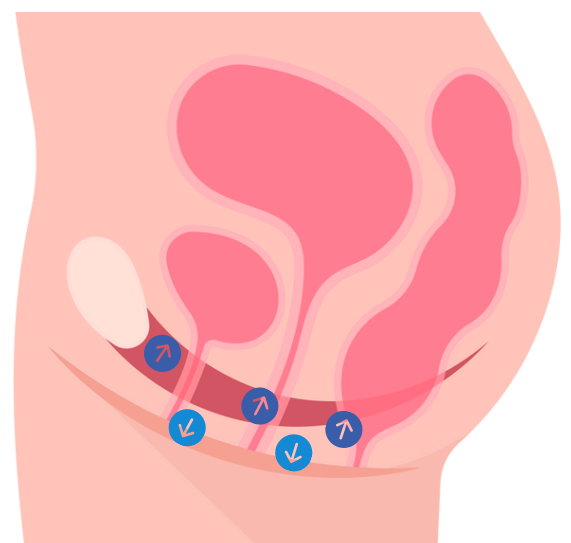
Gently squeeze shut your back passage (as if holding back wind), your vagina (as if gripping a tampon) and your urethra (as if stopping your flow of urine). ⬆️

The muscle contracts from the tailbone all the way forward to the pubic bone

Draw your pelvic floor **inwards and upwards**

Release - let the muscle fully relax releasing all tension ⬇️

First, practice tightening and releasing these muscles without holding or counting



Pelvic Floor Exercises

Step 2 : Relaxing your Pelvic Floor

The pelvic floor must relax fully so that we can empty our bladder, empty our bowel and have intercourse pain free

It is important to practice release as much as contraction. Allow this to happen gently - do not force or bear down

Relaxation exercise:

- Lie on your back/side and breathe deeply
- Relaxation is felt on the out breath
- It may help to imagine your pelvic floor muscles releasing like a drop of water hitting a still pond and rippling outwards, or flower petals gently opening



Step 3 : Strengthening your Pelvic Floor

Your aim is to be able to do the following three times a day:

- 10 holds of 10 seconds each
- 10 fast contractions

Start lying down and progress to sitting or standing when able. Begin by holding for a couple of seconds and gradually each week build-up to the 'magnificent 10'

It is important that you keep breathing naturally whilst doing the exercises

Give yourself time between squeezes to let go of the pelvic floor muscles completely

Squeezy is a useful app by the NHS to help with your exercises. **Click the squeezy icon to download!**



Pelvic Floor Exercises

Step 4 : Improving function

Use 'The Knack': tighten your pelvic floor before coughing, sneezing, or lifting to reduce leaks. Once you can do a pelvic floor contraction confidently in standing, you can try work the contraction into functional exercises, such as sit to stand, or your gym routine (squats and lunges, jumping)

It is also beneficial to maintain a healthy weight and avoid constipation, to minimise any excess strain on the pelvic organs

How to Check Your Technique

- Mirror test: Area between vagina and anus should move up and in – never bulge
- Partner feedback: Ask if they feel the squeeze during sex
- Stop test: Try stopping urine mid-flow – only do this occasionally as a test



How Often to Exercise?

- 3 times a day is ideal
- Avoid overdoing it — more is not necessarily better
- Improvements may take 12–16 weeks (around 3–4 months)

Exercise Diary

Slow pull-ups

Hold your pelvic floor maximal squeeze for as long as possible (up to 10 seconds) and then let go. Then see how many times you can do that in a row with a 3-4 second rest between each squeeze

- I managed a hold of _____ seconds, repeated _____ times
- My goal is to hold for _____ seconds, repeated _____ times

Fast pull-ups

Maximally squeeze tightly and then relax your pelvic floor, count how many times you can do this in a row until the muscles fatigue

- I managed _____ fast contractions in a row
- My goal is to do _____ fast contractions

