

## PELVIC MUSCLE EXERCISES (KEGEL EXERCISES)

*These exercises will strengthen the muscles (called pelvic floor muscles) that help control the flow of urine from the bladder. When you first start doing these exercises, find a quiet place to relax. This helps you exercise the correct muscles. It may take some time to get the right muscles.*

### LOCATING THE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

1. To locate the muscles, it is best to sit down. Sit forward and spread your knees and feet apart. You can place your elbows on your knees if you wish.
2. Try to tightly squeeze the muscles which prevent you from passing rectal gas. (It may help to close your eyes and imagine that you have diarrhea.) These are the muscles that squeeze both the urethra (around the opening to the bladder) and the anus (the opening to the bowel).
3. Try not to tighten your abdominal and buttock muscles while you squeezing the pelvic floor muscles. Do not hold your breath.

### DOING THE EXERCISES

To do 1 pelvic muscle exercise, follow these steps:

1. Squeeze your pelvic muscles.
2. Hold and count slowly..... 1 and 2 and 3 and
3. Relax and count slowly..... 1 and 2 and 3

[Note: You must try to relax your muscles for the same amount of time that you squeeze the muscles.]

10 exercises together are called 1 set. Do 1 set 5 times a day.

As you get better at doing these exercises, you can count to 5 and then relax for a count of 5

After you get used to doing these exercises, you can do them any time, any place, in any position. You can do them while lying, sitting or standing.

*Please Note:* Trying to stop and start while passing urine is no longer recommended as a method of strengthening pelvic muscles. However, to prevent accidental leakage of urine, do squeeze these pelvic muscles each time that you laugh, cough, sneeze, exercise, and lift or push a heavy object.

### Hints for remembering to do your exercises

**Do your exercises:**

- ✓ During commercials when watching TV.
- ✓ While driving in the car, to music on the radio.
- ✓ Before going to sleep or first thing in the morning.

**No one will be aware that you are doing the exercises, so you can repeat them frequently.**

Adapted from "Behavioural Therapies for Urinary Incontinence"<sup>42</sup>; BC Health Guide, Pelvic floor (Kegel) exercises for urinary incontinence in women <[www.bchealthguide.org/kbase/topic/detail/other/hw220109/detail.htm](http://www.bchealthguide.org/kbase/topic/detail/other/hw220109/detail.htm)>; Personal communication, Jennifer Skelly 2007.



## BLADDER RETRAINING

Bladder retraining is a treatment for urinary incontinence that helps you “re-learn” normal bladder function and thus decrease or eliminate urine leakage. The goals of bladder retraining are to:

- a) increase the amount of time between voids (i.e., when you urinate or empty your bladder)
- b) increase the amount of fluid your bladder can hold and
- c) reduce any sense of urgency.

### Bladder retraining instructions

1. Empty your bladder as soon as you get up in the morning.
2. Go to the bathroom every \_\_\_\_\_. (Your doctor or nurse will advise you about this. Usually it is about 2 hours.)
  - During waking hours, wait until your scheduled time before urinating. At that time, be sure to empty your bladder even if you feel no urge to urinate.
  - At night, go to the bathroom only if you awaken and find it necessary.
3. If you feel the urge to urinate before your designated time, try to suppress it. If possible, sit down or stand quietly until the sensation passes. Additional ways to control the urge include:
  - Relax the rest of your body and try to focus on another task to distract yourself.
  - Squeeze pelvic floor muscles quickly several times (Kegel exercises), but do not relax fully between squeezes.

If you're able to suppress the urge, stick to your schedule. If you cannot suppress the urge, wait 5 minutes and then slowly make your way to the bathroom; then get back on your schedule. Repeat this process each time you feel an urge.
4. When you have accomplished this goal, gradually increase the time between trips to the bathroom by 15-minute intervals. If possible, aim to increase the time by 15 minutes every week until you reach a 3-4 hour voiding interval.
5. It should take you between 6 to 12 weeks to reach this goal, though you may have better days and worse days. As you continue bladder retraining you will start to notice more and more good days, so keep practising.
6. You may help speed up the retraining process by doing pelvic floor muscle exercises regularly.

**Note:** Be sure to keep a voiding diary for 1-2 days every week. This will allow you to monitor your progress and identify your problem times. If you are not improving after 6 weeks, return to your doctor/nurse and bring your voiding diary with you.

*Adapted from:* Luft J. Bladder retraining. UCSF Women's Continence Centre 1998

*Available from:*

URL:<http://www.ucsf.edu/cgi/wg/programs/what/Bladder%20retraining.pdf#search=%22%22bladder%20retraining%22%20%2Bluft%22>

