

What is the kegel exercise?

The kegel exercise was named for Dr. Arnold Keigel, who developed this exercise for the pelvic floor muscles. Until the kegel exercise was developed, women had to either put up with urinary stress incontinence (the inability to prevent urination when you laugh, cough, sneeze or jump) or risk surgery, which was often not very effective against incontinence.

There are several ways to perform the kegel exercise, but all concentrate on squeezing the pubococcygeus (pc) muscle (also referred to as pelvic floor muscles) repeatedly to increase strength to eliminate/avoid urinary incontinence as well as achieve other added benefits.

What are the benefits?

The most important postpartum exercise that you should do is the kegel exercise. Since your pelvic floor muscles have been over-stretched during birth, kegel exercises are essential to regain muscle tone to avoid incontinence and prolapse, or falling, of your uterus and other internal organs.

Should I do the kegel exercises during and after pregnancy?

Strengthening your pelvic floor muscles with the kegel exercise can help you:

- 1) Eliminate or avoid incontinence aggravated by the weight of your baby pressing on your bladder during pregnancy
- 2) Increase circulation in the rectal area, helping you heal from tearing and decreasing your chance of developing hemorrhoids
- 3) Avoid prolapse of the uterus, bladder and other pelvic organs after giving birth
- 4) Return to your normal activities after birth without fear of stress incontinence when you laugh, sneeze, cough or jump
- 5) Increase sexual pleasure. Doing the kegel exercise is essential for toning your vaginal muscles and resuming a normal sex-life with your partner after birth.

Postnatal incontinence affects roughly 30% of women and hemorrhoids affect up to 50% of pregnant or recently pregnant women. Both can be eliminated or avoided by performing kegel exercises daily.

How do I identify and isolate the pelvic floor muscles?

The most basic way to isolate your pubococcygeus (pelvic) muscle is to try and stop the flow of urine while you are on the toilet. If you can do this, even partially, you can locate those muscles in the future and perform the same squeeze (kegel exercise) when not in the bathroom.

If you cannot stop the flow of urine, try inserting a finger into the vagina and attempting to squeeze down on your finger. If you feel pressure on your finger, you are on the right track! Try to do as many squeezes per day as possible, aiming for 100-300. As your strength increases, you will be able to feel a stronger squeeze.

If neither of these techniques works for you, do not get disappointed. You just need a little extra help. Take a look at our VagaCare Vaginal Weights to assist you. These weights are designed to help you locate the correct muscle. They also provide resistance when doing a basic kegel which helps build the muscle quicker.

How do I do the kegel exercise?

Here are several variations that you can try. Changing the way in which you perform your exercises from time to time will help you to get stronger.

1) Basic kegels.

Squeeze and release the pelvic floor muscles about 200 times per day. Basic kegels are great for addressing the problems of stress incontinence.

2) Sustained kegels.

Contract the pelvic floor muscles and hold for a count of ten. Repeat ten times. If you cannot hold them this long initially, hold them as long as you can. Eventually, you will be able to do 10-second holds.

3) Elevator kegels.

Visualize the muscles of your vagina as a building, with the base of your pelvic floor as the bottom floor and the top floor at your belly button. Slowly raise the elevator (tighten the muscles) from the bottom floor to the top, give a slight hold and bring the elevator back down, slowly relaxing your muscles from top to bottom.

4) Progressive kegels.

Squeeze a little and hold, count to five.

Squeeze harder and hold, count to five.

Squeeze as hard as possible and hold, count to five.

Release a little and hold, count to five.

Release a little more and hold, count to five.

Release and relax completely.

When should I do the kegel exercise?

Once you have identified the pelvic floor muscles, you can do the kegel exercise anytime, anywhere and no one will even know that you are doing it! If you experience fatigue and aching of the back and abdominal muscles or nervous irritability following the exercises, it is a sign that you are squeezing with your abdominal, back, thigh and/or gluteus muscles as you attempt the exercise. Try to relax all of your muscles and squeeze only the pelvic floor.

I want to thank you for taking the time to learn how to do a kegel exercise. Please review our web site about additional information on our Incontinence Products.

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