

Managing Incontinence Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises Information for men (Kegals)

This information is to help you:

- ❖ Understand why you need to exercise your pelvic floor
- ❖ Learn how to do pelvic floor exercises

What and where is the pelvic floor:

The pelvic floor is a sling of muscles rather like a hammock, which goes from the pubic bone at the front to the tailbone (coccyx) at the back. Its function is to support the pelvic organs and it also prevents leakage of urine or feces from the bladder or bowel by keeping outlets closed. In most men, the pelvic floor acts as a safety mechanism and continence is maintained chiefly by a sphincter muscle at the bladder neck.

Why exercise the pelvic floor?

The pelvic floor muscles need regular exercise (like other muscles of the body) to retain good muscle tone. If they are not exercised enough they may become slackened, stretched and weak and will no longer work effectively. For example, you may leak urine when you cough, laugh, sneeze or even when you get out of a chair. This is known as stress incontinence. Following surgery, the bladder neck sphincter may become weakened, making you more reliant on your pelvic floor. If carried out correctly and regularly, pelvic floor exercises will help prevent leakage from bowel or bladder.

How to identify the pelvic floor:

There are a variety of ways in which to identify your pelvic floor. This is important so that you know you are exercising the right muscles.

Try to stop the flow of urine midstream – the stop test.
Imagine trying to avoid passing wind/flatus.

How do I do pelvic floor exercises?

You can do pelvic floor exercise (PFE's) in any position – sitting, lying, or standing. However, it is important that you are fully relaxed.

- ❖ Slowly tighten the pelvic floor and hold 5-10 seconds. Relax for 4 seconds. Repeat this exercise five times. This is known as a group of exercises. Repeat this group as often as you can to achieve best results.
- ❖ Breathe normally: try not to hold your breath.
- ❖ Make sure that all your other muscles are fully relaxed especially the buttocks, shoulders and stomach.

You might try the PFE's known as "fast twitch exercises" where you tighten and release the pelvic floor muscles as quickly as you can at the end of each set of slow PFE's. As a general guide, carry out five fast twitch exercises five to ten times per day.

If you are doing PFE's as part of a preventative program, this should be a lifetime habit. If this is an individually planned program, your nurse will advise you on a maintenance regimen after your course of exercises are complete.

The length of the course will vary from person to person, depending on your progress. It may be sometime before you see improvement. Don't be disheartened; don't give up!

How will I know if the muscles are getting stronger?

- ❖ You may find it easier to stop the flow of urine when you cough, laugh, sneeze, etc.
- ❖ Do not hesitate to discuss your PFE regimen with the nurse.

If you have any problems or questions please do not hesitate to discuss this with a nurse.