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## **Male Pelvic Floor (Kegel) Exercise Instruction**

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The pelvic floor muscles provide support for the contents of the abdomen and pelvis, act as a constrictor mechanism to control urination and bowel movements, and are involved in sexual function. It can be difficult to identify or learn how to contract these muscles correctly (a pelvic floor contraction has also been called a Kegel contraction).

A helpful way to strengthen and use your pelvic floor is to look at the learning process in three steps:

### **STEP ONE: Learning how to contract the correct muscles**

The first step is simply learning to contract the correct muscles. You can do this by either lying down, sitting or standing – whichever you find easiest. Most men find the easiest way to learn how to contract this muscle group is in lying and simply tightening the ring of muscle around their anus without squeezing their buttock, inner thigh or abdominal muscles. The following are cues that many men find helpful:

1. Do the contraction crisply
2. Tighten anus
3. Lift testicles
4. Pull penis towards body
5. Draw testicles in towards body
6. After contracting, relax the whole pelvic floor (feel the difference?)

Another way to identify the correct contraction is to attempt one of the above cues in sitting and touch the area between your anus and testicles and see if you can feel a rope like bulge form while you attempt to contract these muscle (this is the base of the penis).

If you are having significant difficulty in identifying the correct muscles the following are two other suggestions that can be helpful:

- When peeing, try to stop the urine flow to try to identify the muscles that did this. Initially you might only feel the muscles at the front towards the urethra or at the back towards the anus. As you get better you will realize that both areas are involved and work together. You should not use this technique very often as it can cause difficulties with emptying your bladder. Its main purpose is to help you identify the muscle group.
- While sitting, insert a gloved, lubricated finger into your anus. You will feel some muscle resistance. Insert your finger up to the first knuckle, keeping your body and finger completely still once inserted. Once the muscle resistance around your finger has relaxed, ensuring that your finger and body remained completely still, tighten your anus on your finger. This is a pelvic floor contraction.



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It is really important to make sure that you are not leading with, or tightening, your abdominal, buttock or inner thigh muscles when trying to identify and work with the pelvic floor muscles. Be sure you are breathing normally.

Another really important concept is to focus on the sensation of the muscle contraction in the correct area and not to focus on strength. Trying to do a strong pelvic floor contraction simply results in the wrong muscles being contracted (abdominals, buttock and inner thigh muscles) as well as making it difficult to breathe normally. A stronger pelvic floor muscle contraction is simply a more definite sensation in the correct area.

It is also really important that when you relax the muscle you have a definite feeling of your anus relaxing. If you cannot feel it relaxing this means that the contraction has dissipated while you were attempting to maintain it. It is often best to start holding the muscle for one second. With practice you can gradually increase your ability until you can maintain the contraction for 10 seconds, always ensuring that you feel a good relaxation.

Many men initially find that one of the above cues works better for them than another and that the resulting contraction from different cues feels different. However, with practice most men report that with skill all cues create the same or very similar contraction.

A pelvic floor contraction can be very hard to learn simply from verbal and written instruction. If you are not sure if you are contracting correctly it is recommended that you see a pelvic floor physiotherapist to ensure you have correct technique prior to beginning step two and three below. It can be very hard to identify, isolate and contract your pelvic floor on your own.

### **STEP TWO: Increasing the strength and endurance of the muscles**

Now that you can correctly contract your pelvic floor muscles, you are ready to progress to increasing strength and endurance.

While standing, contract your pelvic floor for 10 seconds/then rest 10 seconds for 30 repetitions every other day. Make sure you are breathing normally and your abdominal, buttock and inner thigh muscles are not involved. When you relax the muscle you should have a definite feeling of letting go. It can take up to three months of regular practice to see the benefits of improved strength. Benefits seen prior to this are usually simply related to improved skill.

### **STEP THREE: Using your pelvic floor to help with bowel or bladder control issues**

Now that you have pelvic floor skill and strength, you can use your pelvic floor to help with bowel or bladder control. Make sure that you contract your pelvic floor muscles prior to any activity that increases pressure within your abdomen. These are things like coughing, sneezing, bending, squatting, lifting and carrying, pushing and pulling. Contract your pelvic floor prior to these activities, maintain the contraction during the activity and only release the contraction once the activity is over. Again, it is important that you have a definite feeling of letting the muscle go when you release the contraction.

