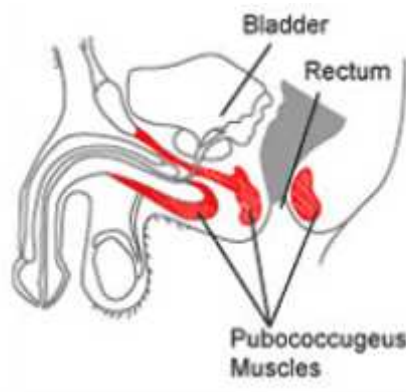


Pelvic floor exercises in men: frequently-asked questions

What is the pelvic floor and why does it become weak?

Many men experience a variety of problems with their urinary system leading to unwanted leakage of urine. Some also have difficulty controlling wind or leakage from the lower bowel. Often this is due to weakness of the muscles of the pelvic floor which have an important function in preventing these problems.



The floor of the pelvis is made up of layers of muscle and other tissue, stretching from the tail bone (coccyx) at the back to the pubic bone in front. A man's pelvic floor supports the bladder and bowel. The urethra (water pipe) and the rectum (back passage) pass through the pelvic floor muscles (see the diagram).

Why do the pelvic floor muscles get weak?

The pelvic floor can be weakened by:

- Some operations for an enlarged prostate gland
- Repeated straining to empty your bowels, usually due to constipation
- Repeated heavy lifting
- A chronic cough such as a smoker's cough, chronic bronchitis or asthma
- Being overweight
- Lack of general fitness

Neurological damage (e.g. after a stroke, after spinal injury and as a result of multiple sclerosis or diabetes) can also produce poor bladder function. Men in these groups should seek advice from a Healthcare professionals.

Pelvic floor exercises are an important part of preparation prior to surgery for removal of the prostate for cancer (radical prostatectomy). They ensure that the muscles holding urine in the bladder are in good condition; they also reduce the amount and duration of any urinary incontinence after the operation.

How do I contract the pelvic floor muscles?

The first thing you need to do is to identify the muscles that need to be exercised:

- Sit or lie comfortably with the muscles of your thighs, buttock and abdomen relaxed
- Tighten the ring of muscle around the back passage as if you are trying to control diarrhoea or wind.

Relax the muscle again. Practice this movement several times until you are sure you are exercising the correct muscles. Try not to squeeze your buttocks, tighten your thighs or contract your tummy muscles.

- Imagine you are passing urine, trying to stop the flow in mid-stream and then re-starting it. If your technique is correct, you will feel the base of your penis move upwards slightly towards your tummy. You can do this "for real" while passing urine but do not do this more than once a week to check your progress, otherwise it may interfere with normal bladder emptying.



Cambridge Urology Partnership

0800 756 7771
www.cambridgeurologypartnership.co.uk
enquiries@cambridgeurologypartnership.co.uk
Nuffield Health Cambridge Hospital
Trumpington Road, Cambridge CB2 8AF

For your peace of mind

Partners: Tev Aho, Andrew Doble, Christof Kastner, John Kelly, Nimish Shah, Oliver Wiseman