



Pelvic floor exercises

Tighten the muscle around the back passage (anus), vagina and front passage (urethra) and lift up inside - as if trying to stop passing wind and urine at the same time. The feeling should be of lifting upwards and inwards.

It is very difficult not to use other muscles as well; try not to clench the buttocks, squeeze the knees together or pull the abdominal muscles in. The very lower abdominals (the transversus abdominis) will tighten, but the waist should not narrow.

It is, of course, essential that you are able to BREATHE throughout all this; try not to hold the breath but to tighten the muscles at the end of a breath out.

If you're doing it correctly no one should be able to see any movement just by looking at you!

1. SLOW SQUEEZES - Use 70-80% of your maximum effort.

Everybody differs in the length of time for which they can squeeze, and in how many squeezes they can do before the muscle gets too tired to be effective. To determine where you should start, tighten the pelvic floor and time how long you can hold it before it starts to let go.

Release the contraction and have a 5 second rest.

Repeat the tighten-hold-release exercise as many times as you can (maximum 10 times).

Your starting block is: _____ seconds _____ repetitions

Depending upon how long you can hold for, practice 5-8 times per day.

As your muscle gets stronger and fitter, your starting block will change. Progress slowly until you can do 10 repetitions and hold each squeeze for 10 seconds, twice a day.

2. FAST SQUEEZES - Use 90-100% of your maximum effort.

It is also important to be able to work these muscles very quickly, so that they can jump in and protect you when you cough or sneeze. Try to tighten the muscles and let go immediately; no hold.

_____ fast contractions _____ times a day.

Depending upon how many you can do, practise 2-5 times per day.

As your muscles get faster, you will be able to do 10 squeezes in less time. Aim for 10 quick squeezes in less than 30 seconds, twice a day.

3. SOFT SQUEEZES - Use <20% of your maximum effort. If you are weak, and struggle to differentiate the level of effort, use <50% of your maximum effort.

It is to your benefit to try and hold a pelvic floor contraction (not as hard as you can, but hard enough to be 'aware of') for longer periods of time. Try and hold at less than 20% (or <50%) of your 'maximum' for 20 seconds and upwards. If you get really good, try and do it whilst doing other things e.g. washing the dishes, preparing the dinner, talking on the phone.

_____ slow contractions _____ times a day

Depending upon how often you practise, you should start doing these 'automatically' with function, hence using your pelvic floor and protecting yourself against life!