

twice. Even if no leakage occurs continue the above exercise programme for one more month. Once your pelvic floor muscles are strong it is important to maintain them. Continue your exercises 2/3 times daily for the rest of your life.

**POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

***Liquid Intake***—you should drink approx. 3-4 pints of liquid a day—do not restrict your intake, it will not reduce your symptoms. In fact, it could make matters worse.

***Frequency of Bladder Emptying***— try to avoid emptying your bladder too frequently as this can reduce its capacity. If you feel that you need to go more often than once every two hours (frequency) then train your bladder to wait longer. When you feel the urge to empty your bladder soon after having done so, trying delaying techniques:

- Tighten your pelvic floor
- Sit on something hard, e.g. the arm of a chair
- Distract your mind, e.g. sing a song

***Bladder Emptying*** —It is important to completely empty the bladder, each time you go to the toilet, without straining. Urine left inside the bladder may irritate the bladder lining, causing inflammation. It may help to lean forward as you pass urine.

***Sudden Movements*** —Try to tighten and hold the pelvic floor muscles prior to sneezing, coughing, etc. This will improve your control and reduce leakage of urine.

If problems continue, be prepared to seek further medical advice.

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***EXERCISES FOR  
THE PELVIC  
FLOOR MUSCLES***



***This leaflet has been designed for the  
patients of The Hedon Group Practice***

This leaflet tells you how to exercise and strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. These muscles form a broad sling, running from front to back and, as their name suggests, form the floor to the pelvis.

The functions of the pelvic floor muscles are:-

To support the pelvic organs, i.e. bladder, uterus and rectum.

To control the outlets from the pelvic organs, i.e. urethra, vagina and anus.

It is important to maintain the strength in these muscles in order to prevent problems occurring, or to increase their strength when problems do occur, e.g. damage to the muscles as a result of childbirth, weakness of the muscles as a result of constipation, chronic cough, being overweight, menopausal changes, persistent heavy lifting, long periods of inactivity due to illness, pelvic surgery.

### ***SYMPTOMS***

These could be many and varied, for example, urgent and/or frequent need to pass urine, leakage of urine when coughing, decreased satisfaction during intercourse. If you are experiencing any of these problems see your family Doctor who may refer you to the Obstetric or Gynaecological Physiotherapist, if appropriate. Pelvic floor muscles need to be exercised just as much as any other weak or damaged muscle and the following exercise programme will help to maintain, or improve, their strength.

### ***THE BASIC EXERCISE***

Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind and at the same time trying to stop your flow of urine mid-stream. The feeling is one of squeeze and lift", closing and drawing-up the back and front passages. It is important to do this without:-

Pulling in your tummy, squeezing your legs together, tightening your buttocks, or holding your breath!! In other words only pelvic floor muscles should be working. This is the "secret exercise", the exercise that no-one can see you performing!! This is called a Pelvic Floor contraction

### ***THE EXERCISE PROGRAMME***

It is important that you read right through the programme before commencing the exercises.

First determine your "starting block".

Tighten your pelvic floor muscles as described on the previous page. Hold tight for as many seconds as you can (up to a maximum of 10 seconds).

How long can you hold the contraction? secs

Release the contraction and rest for 4 seconds. Repeat the "tighten, hold and release" as many times as you can (up to a maximum of 10 repetitions).

How many times can you repeat the contraction?

reps e.g. secs reps

This becomes your "starting block"

Repeat your "starting block" as many times as you can throughout the day .... Every hour if you can! As a result of this muscle training your pelvic floor will get stronger and your "starting block" will change.

e.g. secs reps

This becomes your new "starting block"

This programme builds up the endurance of the muscle group. In other words, the muscles will be able to work harder for longer. It is also important that the muscles are able to react quickly when, for example, you cough or sneeze.

How many quick contractions can you do? reps

Aim to increase this number (up to a maximum of 10)

### ***YOUR EXERCISE PROGRAMME SHOULD THEREFORE CONSIST OF:-***

***Endurance***—slow controlled exercises ("starting block"), followed by:-

***Speed***—short quick exercises

That's the easy bit! The most difficult part of the programme is remembering to do the exercises! Here are some tips to help trigger your memory:-

- Wear your watch on the wrong wrist
- Put stickers in places that will catch your eye, e.g. telephone, fridge, kettle, steering wheel
- Exercise after you have emptied your bladder
- Exercise in any position

For an occasional check, to see how strong the muscles are becoming, try halting the flow of urine in mid-stream (but not if you have a urinary tract infection). It may take 3-6 months to effect good results, but persevere, it will be worth it.

### ***A TEST***

Once you have regained good control, test the muscles. Ensure that your bladder is nearly full (about 3 hours after last empty). Stand, feet apart, jump or bounce up and down on the spot, and cough deeply