

Where Are Pelvic Floor Muscles? How to Find and Feel Your Pelvic Floor

This first and most important step to strengthening your pelvic floor is knowing 'Where are Pelvic Floor Muscles' It is impossible to exercise your pelvic floor muscles correctly if you just can't find or feel your pelvic floor.

Read on now to learn the first steps for how to strengthen your pelvic floor with:

- Where is your pelvic floor?
- Where are pelvic floor muscles?
- Differences in pelvic floor muscles between women and men
- Where are pelvic floor muscles in women? How to feel them working?
- Where are pelvic floor muscles in men?

'Where Are Pelvic Floor Muscles?' expert article is by Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist Michelle Kenway. Michelle is the author of Inside Out the internationally acclaimed guide to pelvic floor exercises.

1. Where is Your Pelvic Floor?

The pelvic floor is shown right, located at the base or lower opening of the pelvis; the area in and around where you sit. Your pelvic floor is inside your body and cannot be viewed with the naked eye.

The pelvic floor does not only consist only of pelvic muscles. It is a hammock-like structure of tissues bound together and it consists of pelvic floor muscles, blood vessels, nerves and strong connective tissues.

The external genital sex organs in men (penis and scrotum) and women (vulva i.e. labia, clitoris and vaginal entrance) lie below or outside the pelvic floor. In contrast the important organs called the pelvic organs (bladder, uterus, rectum and anal canal) all sit above the pelvic floor. The pelvic floor has an opening in both men and women through which the urine tube, vagina and back passage pass through.

2. Where are Pelvic Floor Muscles?

The pelvic floor muscles are positioned at the base or the lowest opening of the pelvis; the area in and around which most people sit. Muscles of the pelvic floor are internal and cannot be seen from outside the body in men or women with the naked eye.

The pelvic muscles are positioned like a mini trampoline that slings across the area where you sit. They run from the pubic bone at the front, to the lower part of the tail bone at the back and from side to side between the sit bones.

The pelvic floor muscles are positioned in layers in the floor of the pelvis. This position can make them vulnerable to strain and injury, especially in women.



3. Differences Between Men and Women

There are some differences in the structure of the pelvic floor muscles between the men and women. These differences make female pelvic floor muscles more prone to strain, injury and consequent dysfunction. Men can also experience pelvic floor muscle dysfunction that can cause erectile dysfunction, bladder and bowel problems and pelvic pain conditions.

In women the bones of the pelvis are wider than those of the male and the sit bones are further apart to allow for childbirth. In contrast, men have narrow hips and a narrower pelvis. This means that the pelvic floor muscles in women span a wider area and therefore weaker than the male pelvic floor muscles. The effect of pregnancy, childbirth and menopause increase the vulnerability of these muscles to injury and dysfunction.

4. Where are Pelvic Floor Muscles in Men?

These techniques can assist men to locate their pelvic floor muscles:

- When emptying the bladder try to stop or slow the flow. This technique can help men locate their pelvic floor muscles. Avoid performing this technique as a regular exercise to avoid interrupting the normal flow of urine. Using this technique once a week can
- Try to tighten the muscles in and around the anus as if trying to avoid passing wind. The buttocks should stay relaxed and breathing should remain regular.
- Stand in front of a full length mirror and watch as you try to use your pelvic floor muscles to lift your scrotum upwards slightly and retract or draw the penis inwards. This action should be visible in the mirror.

5. Where are Pelvic Floor Muscles in Women?

These techniques can assist women locate their pelvic floor muscles:

- When emptying the bladder try to stop or slow the stream. Do this only to help identify the pelvic floor and not as a regular exercise. Do not practice this on a regular basis, once a week is sufficient. Do not perform this technique if you suffer from bladder emptying problems.
- Imagine you are trying to avoid passing wind in doing so attempt to lift and squeeze the muscles in and around the anus. Your buttocks should stay relaxed and your breathing should remain regular.
- Use a mirror to view the entrance to your vagina when lying down preferably on your side with a pillow supporting your legs. Try to lift and squeeze in and around the entrance of your vagina. You should see a squeeze and inwards lift of the vaginal entrance.

Where to Find More Help?

To find a pelvic floor physiotherapist visit the Australian Physiotherapy Association website or contact The Continence Foundation of Australia ph 1800 00 33 66 to find a pelvic floor practitioner in your area.

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