

Pelvic Exercises for Men

Pelvic exercises for men – learn the professional physiotherapy techniques for locating pelvic floor muscles along with expert strength training guidelines for successful pelvic floor exercises.

Read on now to learn about:

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Pelvic exercises for men are exercises designed to improve the strength and function of the male pelvic floor muscles. Pelvic floor exercises are often prescribed for men to treat:

- Erectile dysfunction
- Bladder problems
- Bowel problems
- Rectal prolapse
- Post-surgical pelvic floor problems

The male pelvic floor

The male pelvic floor is positioned at the base or lower opening of the pelvis in and around where a man sits. The position of the male pelvis is shown right.

The pelvic floor is a supportive hammock consisting of the pelvic floor muscles, nerves, blood vessels and strong connective tissues. The male pelvic floor slings from the pubic bone at the front underneath the body to the lower margin of the tailbone (coccyx) at the back (shown right), and between the sit bones from side to side. The male genitals (penis and scrotum) are situated below the level of the male pelvic floor.

The male pelvic floor performs 3 main roles:

- Control and emptying of the bladder and bowel
- Support for the pelvic organs (bladder and rectum)
- Sexual function (erection and ejaculation)

Male pelvic floor muscles

Male pelvic floor muscles sit in layers within the pelvic floor (shown right). They have an opening allowing the urine tube (urethra) and the back passage (anus) to pass through. The male pelvic floor muscles consist of two types of muscle fibres; fast and slow twitch. The slow twitch fibres are the most predominant and these fibres work constantly for support and control. Fast twitch fibres contract quickly to prevent urinary leakage.



Symptoms of male pelvic floor dysfunction

Male pelvic floor muscles are susceptible to injury and dysfunction. Pelvic floor exercises can be effective in treating a range of male pelvic floor problems.

- Involuntary leakage of urine with increased pressure (lifting, sneezing, coughing)
- Involuntary loss of urine associated with a strong urge to empty the bladder
- Loss of urine after bladder emptying (post-void dribble)
- Inability to voluntarily stop or slow the stream of urine once started
- Lack of control over passing wind and/or bowel movements
- Difficulty achieving or maintaining an erection

Causes of male pelvic floor dysfunction

A range of factors can cause pelvic floor dysfunction in men including:

- Constipation and long-term straining
- Obesity or being overweight
- Bladder or spinal surgery
- Surgery for prostate cancer
- Chronic cough caused by lung disease or smoking
- Heavy lifting
- Increasing age

How to do pelvic exercises for men?

In men pelvic floor exercises feel like a definite lift and squeeze in and around the urine tube (urethra) and the back passage. Pelvic floor exercise does not involve squeezing the buttocks or inside thighs. Using the correct pelvic exercise technique is vital to ensuring the success of your pelvic floor strength training program.

Techniques to help find pelvic floor muscles for correct pelvic floor exercises:

1. When emptying the bladder try to stop or slow the flow once started using a lift and squeeze of your pelvic floor muscles. This technique should only be used once a week to locate the pelvic floor muscles and not used as a regular exercise to avoid urinary retention.
2. Try to lift and squeeze the ring of muscles around the anus as if trying to avoid passing wind. You should feel a definite squeeze and lift. Sometimes this can be easier performed lying down when first starting out.
3. Use a full length mirror to watch as you lift and squeeze your pelvic floor muscles. You should see a visible lift of your scrotum and a drawing inwards of the penis
4. When finished emptying the bladder a contraction of the pelvic floor muscles can cause a squeeze out effect of any remaining urine. This can be a useful technique to test and for men with post void dribble.



Pelvic exercise strength training guidelines for men

- When commencing training using kegel exercises always start out with the number of exercises you can comfortably manage using correct technique.
- Lift and squeeze the pelvic floor muscles in and around the urine tube and the anus or back passage.
- Try to maintain the lift and squeeze of your pelvic floor muscles as you continue to breathe throughout for up to 8 seconds.
- Relax and lower your pelvic floor muscles back to their original resting position.
- Rest sufficiently for your pelvic floor muscles to recover and repeat this exercise again for up to 8 seconds.
- Try to repeat your Kegel exercises for up to 8-12 consecutive contractions to complete one full set of exercises.
- Aim to perform 3 sets of kegel exercises every day.

Tips for successful kegel exercises

Kegel exercises are much like gym-based muscle strength exercises; train your pelvic floor muscles with similar principles to gym-based muscle strengthening.

- Focus on quality pelvic exercise not quantity. When starting out your aim should be to use the correct kegel technique for quality contractions.
- Kegel exercise can be more manageable performed lying down initially, progressing to sitting and standing with improved strength and control.
- Start with the number of repetitions or exercises that you can comfortably perform and gradually build up over time. Many men are unable to hold and maintain their pelvic floor muscle contractions when first commencing kegel exercise.
- If you become fatigued stop, rest and recover before recommencing your exercises.
- Gradually increase the strength of your muscle contractions as your pelvic floor strength improves.
- Always contract your pelvic floor muscles before and during any increased effort or exertion including cough, sneeze and lift.

When to seek help?

If you remain unsure about your technique or if you see no improvement in your symptoms after 3 months of dedicated pelvic floor exercises, seek the help of a Continence Nurse Advisor or a Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist. To find a pelvic floor health professional in your area speak to your doctor or contact The Australian Physiotherapy Association on 03 9092 0888 or The Continence Foundation of Australia by phoning the free National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66.

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