

Kegel and Pelvic Floor Exercises in Pregnancy

Kegel exercises are exercises that strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. Strong and elastic pelvic floor muscles will prove helpful to control urine loss. If you do the Kegel exercises regularly it should reduce problems such as urine leakage and prolapse bladder or rectum. Kegel exercises are named for the doctor who developed them in the 1940's.

Your pelvic floor muscles can become stretched and slack as a result of childbirth, aging or a heredity weakness, so Kegels are recommended for every woman and particularly those who leak urine when they cough, sneeze, bear down, etc.

Why do Kegels?

There are five good reasons:

1. **Contracting (squeezing) the pelvic floor muscles helps to squeeze the urethra shut so that urine does not leak out.** This squeeze pressure is important to hold back urine when there is pressure on the bladder, like during coughing or lifting.
2. **Contracting these muscles helps decrease the feeling of urgency.** The pelvic floor muscles send a message to the bladder muscle (the Detrusor) that the bladder should be in the "holding mode" vs. the "emptying mode".
3. **Contracting these muscles builds strength for lifetime support of the pelvic organs.** Women who have weak pelvic floor muscles are at higher risk for prolapse, a "fallen" bladder or uterus.
4. **Contracting these muscles improves your posture.** The pelvic floor muscles are the floor of the Pelvic Pyramid. When energized or engaged with the other two muscles, Transverse Abdominus and Multifidus, can assist you in standing straight and tall.
5. **Contracting these muscles improve blood flow to the area.** Improve blood flow can improve general tissue health and heighten sexual response.

How do you do Kegel Exercises?

Kegels are always a gentle UP and IN movement, first squeezing around the openings at the base of your pelvis, then pulling (think gliding) them in towards your body, like you would if you were trying to keep from passing gas or stopping the urge to urinate.

BREATHE! Do not hold your breath at any time during your exercises; breathe lightly, especially as you hold longer contractions.

When you are not urinating, tighten these muscles and hold the contraction for a count of 5 seconds. Do this 10 times and increase to 10 seconds as you are able. Allow the muscles to relax completely between contractions. Do these 2 times per day.

Kegel “Waltzes”, shorter hold: rest ratio with a waltz-like tempo. Think “squeeze, rest-rest; squeeze, rest-rest; squeeze, rest-rest, etc. Perform sets of 10-15 throughout the day.

Link 2-3 “little Kegels” (2-3 second holds) to things you already do regularly throughout the day:

- Getting in/out of the car
- After urinating/after emptying your bladder
- While showering/brushing your teeth
- Sitting down to eat a meal/snack
- Answering your phone

