

## How to do the Exercises

Tighten the pelvic floor muscles by squeezing vaginally and rectally. Feel the vagina and rectum closing and lifting higher inside of you. It should feel as though you are trying to stop the flow of urine, or hold back gas/a bowel movement. When you release the contract, you will feel the vagina and rectum opening and relaxing. Keep the legs and buttocks relaxed during these exercises. You may feel a small contraction in the abdominals, since these muscles work together with the pelvic floor. The primary contraction should be felt in the vaginal and rectal areas though.

Visualization works well with these exercises since there is no external movement to observe. You may try to visualize an elevator lifting up as you contract and descending as you relax. Other images that work well include a circle shrinking as you contract and enlarging as you relax, or a straw that you are using your vaginal muscles to pull up on.

The muscles have two types of fibers, fast twitch and slow twitch. The slow twitch (tonic) fibers are strengthened through holding the contraction for a period of time, the fast twitch (phasic) fibers are worked by tightening rapidly then immediately releasing. The two exercises are as follows:

★ *Quick flick 15 times, 2x/day*  
**PHASIC:** Squeeze and release the pelvic floor, feel the contraction both vaginally and rectally. Make sure you release the contraction fully with each repetition. Do not hold this exercise for any period of time. Perform 15 repetitions, 4 times per day. The muscles need to be able to respond quickly to changes in pressure within the abdominal cavity, such as when you sneeze or cough. The squeeze will be fairly quick (DO NOT HOLD THE SQUEEZE) But relaxing will be slower. Give yourself 5-7 seconds to relax fully between each squeeze. Do these exercises lying down on your back at first.

★ *Squeeze and hold*  
**TONIC:** Tighten the pelvic floor muscles and hold for a count of 5 seconds. Then release and rest for 10 seconds. Repeat this exercise 10 times, 2 times per day. As your strength improves, the amount of time that you hold this exercise for will increase to improve your endurance.

Lower abdominal strengthening exercises may be helpful for improving bladder control. Your therapist will instruct you in the correct exercise. The lower abdominals work together with the pelvic floor to help pull the urethra and bladder up into the pelvic cavity. By shifting abdominal pressure away from the pelvic floor. Co-contraction of the pelvic floor and abdominals before and during a cough or sneeze can decrease the amount of urinary leakage.

**Do not hold your breath while exercising or lifting.** Try to exhale during exertion to avoid increasing pressure on the pelvic floor and bladder. During bowel movements, relax the pelvic floor and avoid straining or pushing to empty your bowels.

Initially, just perform the exercises. Pay attention to what you feel as the muscles contract and relax. As your coordination and strength improve, you may fit these exercises into your daily life. Some patients do these exercises while brushing their teeth, while stopped at red lights, while cooking dinner, or doing other activities.

Make sure you remember to fully relax the pelvic floor muscles after each contraction.

**Big Belly Breathing:** When you breathe in, the abdominals will expand and relax outward, when you breathe out, the abdominals will contract and draw inward. Repeat for 3-4 minutes, one time daily.