

## Some helpful hints:

- Keep your weight within a healthy range for your height and age.
- Develop good bowel habits (see 'Healthy Bowel Habits' leaflet).
- Improvement in pelvic floor muscle strength will take 3-4 months of regular training of the muscles.
- Remember to use your muscles whenever you exert yourself during daily activities.

The best results will be achieved by seeking help from a continence advisor or pelvic floor physiotherapist (with specialised training in continence), who will design an individual training programme especially suited to you.

Pelvic floor exercises may also be useful for people on a bladder training programme (see 'Bladder Training' leaflet).

## How to seek help:

For any enquiries visit our website [www.continence.org.nz](http://www.continence.org.nz) or call the bladder helpline 0800 650 659.

continence **NZ**

 [www.continence.org.nz](http://www.continence.org.nz)

 **Helpline: 0800 650 659**

Proudly supported by



# Pelvic Floor Muscle Training in Men

continence **NZ**

## What are the Pelvic Floor Muscles?

The pelvic floor muscles are a layer of muscles stretching from the pubic bone in the front to the tail bone at the back. They form the floor of the pelvis.

- The pelvic floor muscles help:
- support the pelvic organs (bladder and bowel)
- maintain bladder and bowel control, and help prevent accidents
- control problems such as frequency and urgency
- empty the bladder and bowel
- gain and maintain an erection
- contribute to core stability

## Factors contributing to pelvic floor muscle weakness:

- prostate surgery
- neurological conditions e.g. stroke, Parkinson's disease
- diabetes
- constipation and straining
- heavy lifting
- lack of general fitness
- ageing
- obesity
- disuse (not exercising the pelvic floor muscles)

## Identifying the Pelvic Floor Muscles:

- Sit comfortably, in an upright position - your thighs, buttocks and tummy muscles should be relaxed.
- Squeeze and lift inside as if you were trying to stop passing urine, or stop yourself passing wind.
- If you are only able to feel a small movement - don't worry! Even people with very weak muscles can improve.
- If you feel unsure whether you have identified the correct muscles try to stop your flow when passing urine, then restart it. Only do this to identify the correct muscles to use – THIS IS A TEST ONLY – not an exercise.

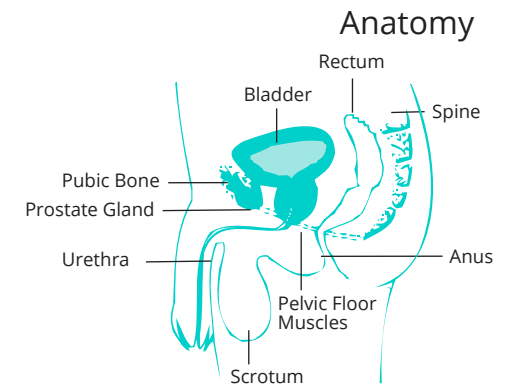
If you are unable to feel a definite squeeze and lift action in your pelvic floor muscles you should seek professional advice from a specialised pelvic floor physiotherapist or continence advisor.

## Starting your pelvic floor muscle training programme:

At first you may need to perform these exercises while sitting or lying. As the muscles strengthen you can progress to other positions such as standing. Like any activity, start with what you can achieve and progress from there.

### If you can feel the muscles working, exercise them by:

- squeezing / tightening and drawing up and in around both your anus (back passage) and urethra (bladder outlet)
- LIFT UP inside and try to HOLD this contraction STRONGLY for as long as you can (1-10 seconds). KEEP BREATHING! Now release and RELAX. You should have a definite feeling of letting go.



- rest for 10 seconds - repeat, and remember it is important to rest after each one. If you find it easy to hold, try to hold longer and repeat as many as you are able. Work towards 10 long, strong holds (this is 1 set)
- now try 5 -10 short, fast STRONG contractions. Do NOT hold your breath. Do NOT push down instead of squeezing and lifting. Do NOT suck your tummy in tightly, however you should feel a gentle pulling in of your lower tummy as you exercise the pelvic floor muscles. Do NOT tighten your buttocks or thighs.

Try to set aside time each day for your exercises. Aim for 3 sets, but remember QUALITY is important.

A few GOOD contractions are more beneficial than many half hearted ones and good results take TIME and EFFORT.

Remember to use the muscles when you need them most. Always tighten before you cough, sneeze, lift, bend, get up out of a chair etc.

### Progressing your programme:

- Increase the length and number of holds you do in succession before experiencing muscle fatigue.
- Work towards 10 long, strong holds. Increase the number of short fast contractions.
- Always do your maximum number of QUALITY contractions.