Kegel or Pelvic Floor Exercises for Women

Kegel or pelvic floor muscles exercises help strengthen weak muscles around your bladder. When these muscles are weak, you can leak urine.

What are pelvic floor muscles?
The pelvic floor is made up of muscles that give support to your uterus, bladder and rectum. These muscles also support, lift and control muscles that close your urethra (the tube that carries urine from your bladder to the outside of your body).

How do I do Kegel exercises?
To do a Kegel exercise, you relax and tighten the muscles you use to control the flow of urine. Kegel exercises are easy to do and can be done anytime.

How do I find the right muscles?
To find the right muscles, try the following:

- The next time you urinate, try to start and stop your urine stream.
- This exercise will help you find the right muscles. Repeat this exercise 1 time each week to check if you are using the correct muscles.
- Do not tighten your buttocks or thigh muscles when doing these exercises. Relax your stomach muscles as much as possible.
- To check that you are doing the exercise right, insert one finger into your vagina and squeeze the muscle. You should feel the muscle tighten around your finger.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

What are the steps to do these exercises?

- Start by squeezing your muscles for a count of 4 then relax for a count of 4. At first, you may only be able to squeeze your muscles for 1 to 2 seconds but as your muscles get stronger, you will be able to hold the count of 4.

- When squeezing to a count of 4 becomes easy, you can increase the squeezing to a count of 8. Do this for 5 minutes 2 times each day.

- It is important to relax in between each muscle squeeze. Let your muscles go loose; do not push down.

Where can I do these exercises?

When you first start doing the exercises, find a place where you can do them without being interrupted. After you have done them for a while, you can practice the exercises anytime and anywhere. It often takes 6 to 12 weeks to see results if you do these exercises regularly.

Tips to remember:

Always squeeze your pelvic floor muscles when you:

- Sit up from lying down
- Stand from a sitting position
- Lift something heavy

You can practice squeezing your muscles when you are watching TV, standing in line or driving a car.

Are there any precautions?

- Breathe while you do your exercises. Do not hold your breath. It may put more pressure on your pelvic muscles.

- Follow the directions that your health care team has given you.