

Pelvic Floor Exercises

A guide for pregnant women

Five minutes a day for your pelvic floor
during your pregnancy, birth and beyond

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District
Women's Health Physiotherapy



Health
Illawarra Shoalhaven
Local Health District

Why exercise the pelvic floor?

Exercises for your pelvic floor muscles will help you stay in control of your bladder and bowel, avoid leaking, minimise back pain and keep you moving well during your pregnancy.

This will take just 5 minutes a day. They are free to do and you can do them whenever and wherever you like. It is recommended to start these exercises in your pregnancy.

Step one - Finding the right muscles

The pelvic floor is a deep group of muscles at the base or “floor” of the pelvis. Most women describe doing a pelvic floor exercise as a squeeze in and a lift up of the muscles around the vagina and back passage. Nothing else moves on the outside and it is important to keep breathing (this can be a challenge!). See the websites listed on page 3 of this booklet for more tips on “finding” your pelvic floor.

Your midwife or doctor may also confirm for you that you are doing it right. For some women, training with a specialist Women’s Health and Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist is needed.

What position should I be in?

Choose an easy position first and go to more difficult positions as you feel stronger and more confident, and can do more repeats or sets of the exercises. The easiest position is lying down (side lying is best in pregnancy). Sitting is a bit harder, standing up is harder again. In the last few weeks of pregnancy and straight after the birth you may need to go back to the easiest positions again (and do few repeats or sets).

How many should I do?

Here is a set that is easy to remember. The long holds will help your endurance - important for holding when you need to wait for a toilet and to reduce back pain. The strong holds are important for supporting your bladder and back when you lift, sneeze, laugh and exercise. Start with less and build up to:

- 10 long holds (gently squeeze and hold for 1-2 seconds, before letting go. Gradually work up to a 10 second hold)
- 5 strong holds (squeeze up and in as hard as you can and then let go. Gradually build up to 10 strong holds)
- Rest a minute or so and then repeat 2 times

You are done for the day – well done!

When should I *not* exercise my pelvic floor muscles?

- If instructed by your obstetrician, midwife or doctor
- If you have an overactive pelvic floor – e.g. cannot relax the muscles or you have a history of pain during sex
- If the exercises cause any pain or pressure or do not feel right

More information, advice and help can be found at:

- www.continence.org.au
- www.pelvicfloorexercises.com.au
- www.pelvicfloorfirst.com.au
- www.physiotherapy.asn.au
- [National Continence Helpline – Free call: 1800 330 066](http://www.nationalcontinencehelpline.com.au)

Or you can get a referral to a Women's Health Physiotherapist.



Contact Details

Women's Health Physiotherapists
are located at
The Wollongong Hospital
and Shoalhaven District Memorial
Hospital.

Referrals required.
For more information about our
service please call:

4253 4502 (Wollongong)
4423 9272 (Shoalhaven)

Need an interpreter? Professional interpreters are available if you need help to communicate in English, or if you are Deaf. Our staff can also ask for an interpreter. The staff will book an interpreter for you. Interpreter Services are free and confidential. You can bring a family member or friend with you to the appointment. If you need help to communicate it should be through a professional interpreter. You can also call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 if you need to speak to us before your appointment.