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Pelvic floor exercises for people with a penis



Tips for patients

Community Care
Physiotherapy

Canberra Health Services

Community Health Intake:
(02) 5124 9977

Pelvic Health Physiotherapists:

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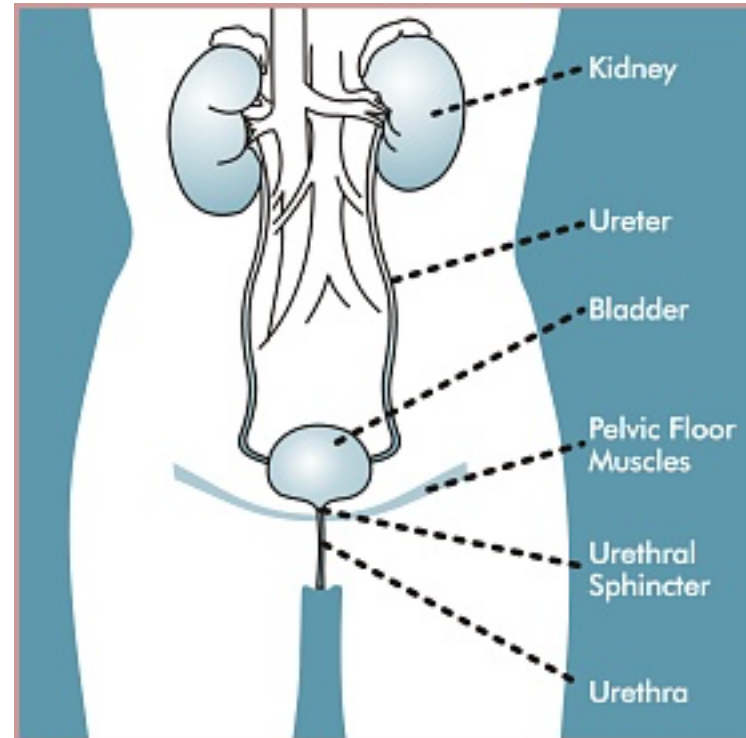


Overview

- What is the pelvic floor
- What are the functions of the pelvic floor
- How to activate your pelvic floor
- Healthy bladder habits

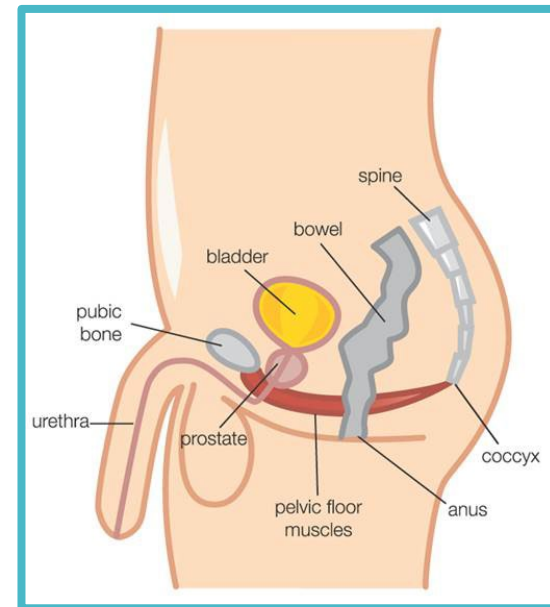
How the bladder works

- When we have a drink, it flows through our body and then through the kidneys
- The waste liquid – urine – drains into the bladder
- The bladder stores this urine. It does this by relaxing its stretchy muscular wall as the bladder fills. Muscles at the base of the bladder and in the pelvic floor contract to hold the urine in
- When the bladder is full it sends a message to the brain saying “I’m full’
- When you are at the toilet the brain then tells the holding muscles to relax and the bladder muscle to squeeze until the bladder is empty



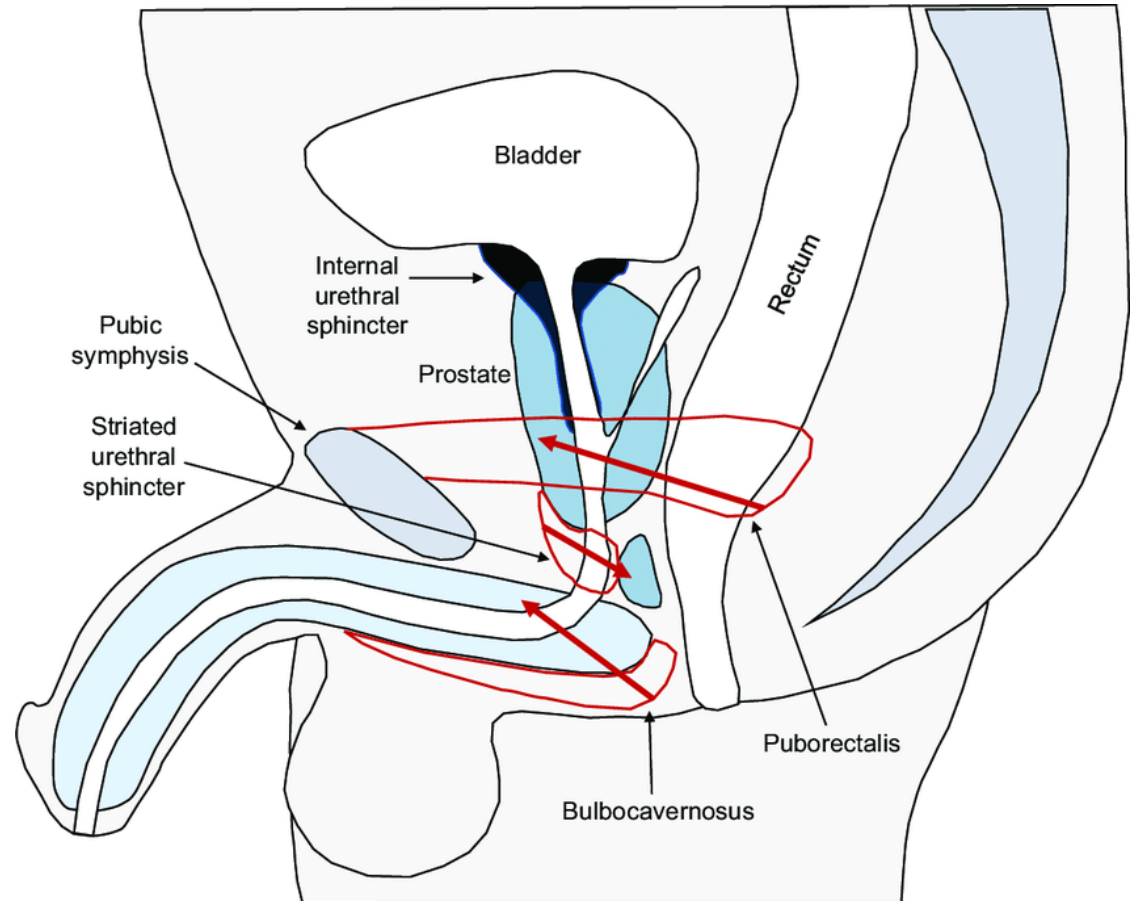
What are the functions of the pelvic floor?

- To support continence
- To support our pelvic organs
- The pelvic floor muscles have a role in erectile function



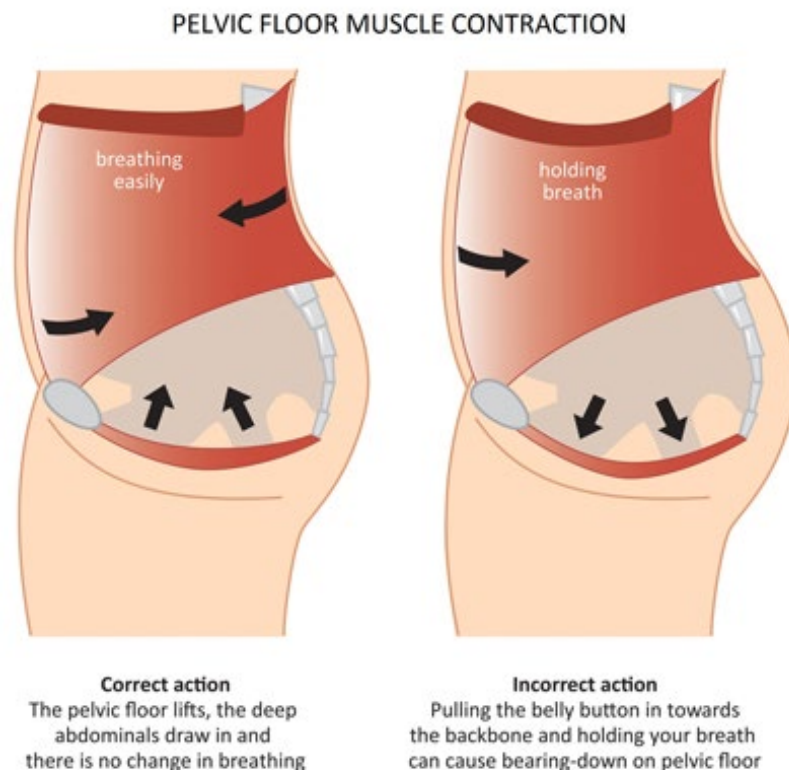
How the pelvic floor works

- The red outlined muscles pictured are the main muscles of the pelvic floor
- They work in a coordinated manner to compress the urethra and prevent urine from leaking
- When the prostate is removed these muscles need to work much harder to maintain continence



Correct pelvic floor action

- When the pelvic floor is activated correctly the pelvic floor should lift, breathing should stay relaxed, and the tummy muscles should not tense
- If the muscles are over tightened breath holding may occur and urine might squeeze out



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What can stop the pelvic floor muscles working effectively?

- Surgery such as prostatectomy in which the prostate is removed
- An enlarged prostate may put pressure on the urethra and stop the bladder from emptying normally
- Constipation
- Poor bladder habits
- Pain



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Signs that the pelvic floor may not be working properly

- Stress urinary incontinence: leakage during activities such as coughing, laughing, sneezing or sports
- Urinary urgency/urinary urge incontinence: a sudden feeling that you need to rush to the toilet that may also result in leakage
- Bowel/anal incontinence: accidental leakage from the bowel of faeces or difficulty controlling wind
- Post-micturition dribble: leakage of a few drops of urine after you have finished urinating



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The facts of urinary incontinence

- Post prostatectomy urinary incontinence varies between 1-87% of patients depending on surgical technique, time and definition of incontinence
- 16-51% of men may experience incontinence 12 months after prostatectomy
- 1-2% of men in the general population without prostate issues may experience incontinence
- It has a significant psychological and physical impact on men
- It is essential to start these exercises as soon as you know you will need surgery (ideally 6 weeks beforehand)



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How to activate your pelvic floor

- Find the cue that works for you:
- Retract or shorten your penis OR
- Lift-up your scrotum OR
- As if stopping the flow of urine OR
- Gently tense the pelvic floor muscles as if stopping wind OR
- You might find a combination of cues work best for you



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Relax

- Full relaxation is as important as a contraction
- Relax between activation and let the belly relax, testicles drop, and anus relax
- You are not aiming for clenched bottom muscles or tense tummies. You should be able to breathe comfortably and not feel you must brace



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Practice positions

- Learn the exercises in lying
- As soon as you have the correct action start to practice in sitting and standing as these are the positions you are most likely to experience symptoms such as leaking



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Practice makes perfect

- Practice in front of a mirror. You should see the penis shorten and the scrotum lift. Make sure the other muscles stay relaxed.
- Feel under the scrotum and see if the muscles between the scrotum and back passage tighten and swell.
- Remember don't hold your breath or squeeze your buttocks. Relax fully between squeezes.
- It is good to practice using the muscles as you go from sit to stand, and before you cough and sneeze to train them for this action.



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Pelvic floor exercises pre and post prostatectomy

- Tighten and hold the contraction for 1 second 10 times
- Then practice holding for 10 seconds 10 times with equal rest duration
- This might feel very hard to start so you may have to start with 5 seconds 10 times.
- These 2 exercises total one set
- Once you have the correct technique aim to practice a set of exercises 6 times/day
- This will total 120 repetitions per day
- Try to do the exercises in standing



Remember

- Practice tightening the muscles before you cough, sneeze or lift.
- Practice until they switch on automatically.
- Remember to ensure you have the specific action.
- Remember you are not only strengthening these muscles you are also training them to work automatically as you recover.
- The earlier you can start the exercises before surgery the likelihood of earlier recovery increases after surgery.
- Remember do not do the exercises whilst you still have a catheter, wait until the catheter is removed.



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How long do I continue the exercises?

- Pelvic floor exercises are not a “quick fix”.
- This is the same as asking “how long do I need to do my push-ups for”?
- It is important to continue with your exercises even if they do not seem to be helping as muscle strengthening takes time.
- Remember to make an individual appointment with a pelvic health physiotherapist if you are not sure if you have the correct action

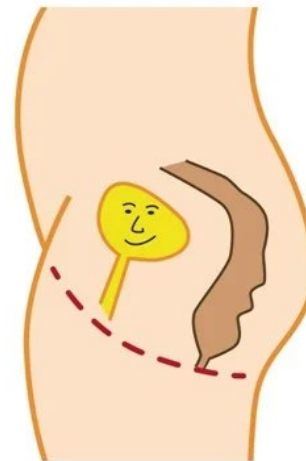


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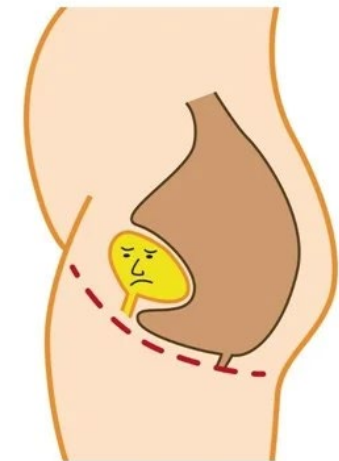
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Remember healthy bladder habits

- Keep your bowels happy and avoid constipation
- Drink 1.5-2l of fluid per day
- Drink mainly water
- Avoid bladder irritants including too much caffeine
- Ensure you empty your bladder completely.



Normal



Constipated



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Extra tips

- The following things can reduce the pressure on your pelvic floor muscles:
 - Try to maintain a healthy weight and level of fitness. Being overweight can put pressure on your pelvic floor muscles. This could make you leak more urine.
 - Physical activity can help you to stay fit and keep to a healthy weight.
 - Eat plenty of fibre and drink plenty of fluids to avoid constipation (difficulty emptying your bowels), as this can put pressure on your pelvic floor muscles.



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Extra tips

- If you smoke, try to stop as this can cause coughing, which puts pressure on your pelvic floor muscles. It also weakens connective tissues holding your body together.
- Speak to your doctor for help with hay fever, COVID, flu, asthma or bronchitis to reduce sneezing and coughing.
- Avoid heavy lifting. If you must lift something heavy, tighten your pelvic floor muscles at the same time. This can help to prevent leaking urine.



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If you need more help

Call the Community Health Intake on (02) 5124 9977 to book an individualised appointment with the Pelvic Health Physiotherapist.

The Contenance Foundation of Australia and the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia are also a great source of information and resources.



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Thank you



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Acknowledgement of Country



Canberra Health Services acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and contribution to the life of this city and region.



Accessibility

Call (02) 5124 0000



Call 131 450

canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/accessibility