



The Center for Women

Obstetrics & Gynecology

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Kegel Exercises

What are Kegel exercises?

These exercises were originally developed by Dr. Arnold Kegel to help women with problems controlling urination. They are designed to strengthen and give you voluntary control of a muscle called the pubococcygeus (or P.C. for short). The P.C. muscle is part of a sling of muscle stretching from your pubic bone in front of your coccyx, or tailbone, in back. The muscle encircles not only the urethra (urinary opening) but also the vaginal opening and the rectum.

Why do Kegel exercises?

To help control loss of urine brought on by such things as laughing, coughing or sneezing.

To improve muscle tone in the vaginal area, especially before and after childbirth.

How do you identify the P.C. muscle?

Sit on the toilet. Spread your legs apart. See if you can stop and start the flow of urine without moving your legs. If you can stop and start the stream, you are using the P.C. muscle. If you do not succeed the first time, keep trying until you have identified the muscle.

How do you do Kegel exercises?

Tighten the P.C. muscle as you did to stop the urine. Hold it for a slow count of three. Relax it.

Do your exercises in sets of ten. Start by doing one set (ten contractions) five times a day. Each week increase the number of exercises in a set by five (15, 20, 25, etc.) Keep doing five sets daily, increasing the number of exercises until you note improvement in your muscle control.

When can you do Kegel exercises?

You can do these exercises any time during daily activities. A good way to remember to do your Kegel exercise is to exercise in the morning when you wake up, during certain daily activities, and before going to sleep at night. You do not have to be in any particular position to do Kegel exercises. In a week or two, you should begin to notice improved control. If you do not notice improvement after several weeks, consult your physician for further evaluation.