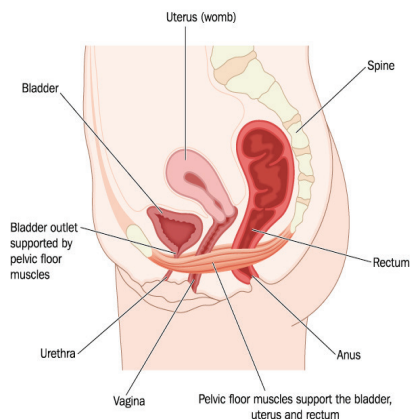


The pelvic floor is the group of muscles that supports the pelvic organs and form the birth canal and passages for urine and stools. Imagine a hammock lifting and supporting the pelvic organs above... that's your pelvic floor! These muscles pay a vital role in keeping us continent, but also in child birth, sexual intercourse, allowing us to urinate and open our bowels too. The pelvic floor muscles may become weakened by childbirth, chronic cough, constipation or lack of use. If your pelvic floor muscles are too weak or too tight (they could be both), then this can cause problems. Pelvic floor exercises will strengthen the muscles and your symptoms should improve.



Pelvic Floor Exercises

- Sit or lie comfortably with your knees slightly apart.
- Squeeze and lift the muscle around the back passage as if you were trying to stop wind.
- Then squeeze and lift the muscle around the front passage as if trying to slow the flow of urine.
- You should feel the muscle move slightly as if it is being drawn up inside.
- No one should be able to see that you are doing these exercises, so your buttocks, tummy or legs should not be moving as you squeeze your pelvic floor. Remember to breathe!
- Each time you do your pelvic floor exercises do some fast squeezes and some squeezes that you hold. Start with 5x5 second slow squeezes and 5 fast squeezes 3 times per day.

Exercise Tips

- You should get into the habit of doing the exercises by linking them to everyday activities, for example after emptying your bladder or when making a hot drink.
- Squeeze your pelvic floor muscles each time you cough, sneeze or lift anything heavy.
- Practice the exercises sitting, standing and lying. It is often easier to begin with lying but altering the position will improve the muscle strength.
- You must persevere; it will take between 6-12 weeks for the muscles to strengthen. These exercises should be continued as a life commitment.

BLADDER AND STRESS INCONTINENCE



Adults usually go to the toilet between four and seven times a day and no more than once during the night. When we first feel the need to go to the toilet, we can usually hold on until it is convenient for us to go. Normally when your bladder is filling up, the bladder muscle is relaxed. When the bladder is becoming full it sends a signal to the brain. Then, when it is convenient and we decide to go to the toilet, the bladder muscles begin to contract and the urine is passed.

If you have stress incontinence, it means that urine leaks from you when you exercise, strain, run, jump, cough or sneeze. It is not related to emotional stress in any way. Physical exercise or straining causes extra pressure on the bladder. If the muscles that support and close off the bladder do not work properly urine can leak out.

What is an Overactive Bladder?

An overactive bladder is when you have a sudden urge to pass urine which is difficult to ignore. It means that your bladder wants to squeeze out urine, even if it is not full.

Symptoms of an over active bladder include:

Urgency – you suddenly need to go to the toilet immediately and if you don't, you may leak urine.

Frequency – going to the toilet more than 8 times in 24hrs.

Urgency incontinence – when you leak while feeling the need to pass urine suddenly.

Nocturia –waking more than once in the night for the toilet.

You may need to take tablets to help your bladder relax better, these will be prescribed by a healthcare professional and typically need to be taken for up to 6 months. Most medicines used to treat the symptoms of an overactive bladder can cause side effects. It is always better to have made changes to your diet and lifestyle before trying medication.

Promoting Good Diet habits

It is important to eat a balanced diet and if you have difficulties with your bladder or bowels try and keep a diary to see if anything in particular is aggravating the symptoms. Some drinks can be known to irritate the bladder and make you feel like you want to go to the toilet more often. It is important not to limit your fluid intake, but to switch to drinking the right things aiming to drink 1.5 litres daily. If you regularly need to go to the toilet at night try to have your last drink 2 hours before you go to bed.

Recommended Drinks	Drinks to Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Milk • Herbal Teas • Diluted Fruit juice/ Squash • 1 Glass of Cranberry Juice • Decaffeinated Tea & Coffee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fizzy Drinks • Tea • Coffee • Hot Chocolate • Green Tea • Alcohol • Fruit Juice • Citrus Fruits & Tomatoes