

## Kegel Exercises

*Information from both Medline Plus and Bladder Cancer Canada*

Kegel Exercises – *For Male specific see Below*

A Kegel exercise is like pretending you have to urinate and then holding it. You relax and tighten the muscles that control urine flow. It is important to find the right muscles to tighten. Next time you have to urinate, start to go and then stop. Feel the muscles in your vagina (for women), bladder, or anus get tight and move up. These are the pelvic floor muscles. If you feel them tighten, you have done the exercise right. Your thighs, buttock muscles, and abdomen should remain relaxed.

*These exercises can be done in seated, supine or standing position.*

### **In Supine:**

- Make sure your bladder is empty.
- Lying on your back with legs hip width apart and knees bent with feet on the ground. Legs can be out straight if more comfortable.
- If required, place towel or pillow under head but not shoulders to help with any tightness felt in neck and upper back.
- Place fingers onto lower abdominals (between hip bones) and cough –this is the feeling you are looking for when you activate your pelvic floor (deep core) muscles.
- Engage these muscles independently by imagining you need to hold your urine.

### **Seated, supine or standing:**

- Tighten your pelvic floor muscles and hold tight and count to 5-8 seconds and release.
- Relax the muscles and count to 10. Repeat 10 times, 3 times a day (morning, afternoon, and night).
- Breathe deeply and relax your body when you are doing these exercises.
- Make sure you are not tightening your stomach, thigh, buttock, or chest muscles.

### **If you still are not sure you are tightening the right muscles:**

- Imagine that you are trying to keep yourself from passing gas.
- Women: Insert a finger into your vagina. Tighten the muscles as if you are holding in your urine, then let go. You should feel the muscles tighten and move up and down.
- Men: Insert a finger into your rectum. Tighten the muscles as if you are holding in your urine, then let go. You should feel the muscles tighten and move up and down. *(See Prostate Cancer for more information)*

Once you learn how to do them, do not practice Kegel exercises at the same time you are urinating more than twice a month. Doing the exercises while you are urinating can weaken your pelvic floor muscles over time or cause damage to bladder and kidneys.

In women, doing Kegel exercises incorrectly or with too much force may cause vaginal muscles to tighten too much. This can cause pain during sexual intercourse.

## Kegel Exercises - Male Specific

- Tighten your rectum as if you are trying to control passing gas or pinching off a stool. Do not tense the muscles of your legs, buttocks, or abdomen. Do not hold your breath.
- You can also imagine that you are trying to stop the flow of urine. If you still cannot find these muscles, you might try actually urinating and then trying to slow or stop the flow of urine midstream without using leg, buttocks or abdominal muscles.
- When you find these muscles, you will feel the muscles pulling upward and inward. Your penis and testicles also will move up and down slightly as you contract and relax.
- If you still are unsure if you are using the proper muscles, or if symptoms are not improving, contact your physician for more help.

### How to Do the Male Kegel Exercises

- Male Kegel exercise is best done after emptying your bladder.
- Tighten the muscles you located above and hold for 3 to 5 seconds, or as long as you can at first. As these muscles get stronger, you will be able to hold them longer.
- Relax for 3 to 5 seconds or for as long as you tightened the muscles, then repeat.
- Breathe normally.
- Do 5 to 7 exercises at a time, 3 times a day minimum. As you get stronger, increase up to 15 exercises at a time, 4 times a day.
- In addition for more advanced exercises, you might consider incorporating a series of quick flexes (1 second) into this routine of long flexes. For example, perform 30 quick (1 second flexes) rapidly. Then 1 long contraction for as long as you can. Then repeat. Add more repetitions as you get stronger.
- The key, as with any physical training, is to set up a consistent routine and to perform the exercise properly.

### Things to Remember about Male Kegel Exercise

- Make sure you are ONLY using the pelvic muscles. When you are first beginning the male Kegel exercise, you may consider standing in front of a mirror with a hand on your abdomen or buttocks to feel for movement. It is important that you do NOT use your abdominals, buttocks, or leg muscles.
- Remember to breathe normally while exercising. Kegel exercise does not involve holding your breath.
- Exercise takes time to strengthen these muscles, just as with any physical therapy. You should start noticing less leakage after 4-6 weeks of consistent daily exercise, and an even larger difference after 3 months. If you do not see an improvement, you may not be exercising the proper muscles. You should be keeping track of how many pads you use per day to monitor your own progress.
- Pelvic muscle exercises also improve orgasmic function thereby speeding your return to potency. Contracting these muscles can aid in squeezing more blood into the penis to improve erectile function.
- Be pro-active, do your Kegel exercises faithfully and you will see results.

Ahlering, Thomas MD

### References

Ahlering, Thomas MD – Kegel Exercises for Men - <http://www.urology.uci.edu/prostate/kegel.html>

Bladder Cancer Canada - Bladder cancer exercise sample (Kegel)- <https://bladdercancercanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Bladder-Cancer-Sample-Exercises.pdf>

Medline Plus – Kegel Exercises - <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000141.htm>