

# Pelvic floor exercises

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The pelvic floor muscles support your pelvic organs, stabilise the pelvic joints and are responsible for the control of bladder and bowel functions. These muscles are stretched during pregnancy and birth – which can sometimes lead to weakness or dysfunction during pregnancy and particularly after birth.

## Strengthening these muscles will:

- maintain or improve bladder and bowel control
- reduce the risk of prolapse of the pelvic organs
- help to stabilise the joints of the pelvis and lower spine
- increase sexual enjoyment for you and your partner.

Exercises should be started as soon as your catheter (if you have had one) is removed and you have passed urine. The exercises can help reduce swelling and pain as well as treat/prevent incontinence. They should be completed at least three times a day. **It can take up to three months for the muscles to regain their strength.**

## How to do your pelvic floor exercises:

Lay or sit down comfortably and begin by imagining you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind/urine by squeezing the muscles around the back passage and vagina. Don't do this whilst on the toilet, and don't hold your urine as this can lead to problems with bladder function.

You should work this muscle in two ways:

1. Hold the squeeze for a few seconds and then relax. Repeat this up to 10 times, gradually holding the squeeze for longer (up to 10 seconds).
2. Squeeze and release straight away. Repeat this 10 times.

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## For more information visit:

- **NHS Choices:** [www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/your-body-after-childbirth.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/your-body-after-childbirth.aspx)
- **You can download an APP to help with these exercises:**  
**NHS Choices:** [www.squeezyapp.co.uk](http://www.squeezyapp.co.uk)