If you want to try some advanced exercises, you can use a tool to add weight or resistance while you do your exercises. Once you have mastered lifting for 10 seconds, try holding for 10 seconds while standing. If you can hold for 10 seconds, still using good technique (not involving other muscles, remaining relaxed, and breathing normally) you can do this standing. If you continue using the Exercise Egg, the weight of the egg itself will offer resistance. If you wish to go further, you can put coins in the egg's storage pouch, and hang it from the string attached to the egg. Add more coins to increase the weight.

I heard that to learn Kegels, I should try to stop the flow while I'm urinating. Is that true? Intentionally stopping the flow of urine can be uncomfortable, lead to urethral irritation, and “confuse” the bladder, making it harder to completely empty when you urinate. We don’t recommend it.

High Tone Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

High Tone Pelvic Floor Dysfunction occurs when the pelvic floor muscles are overly tense, inflexible, or in spasm. Sometimes, only portions of the muscle spasm or are very sensitive to movement and or touch. These painful knots, or “trigger points”, may be isolated muscle illness within an otherwise healthy muscle group.

Whatever the case, the tension in the muscles means that they are unable to move and stretch with daily activities. This causes uneven stress on the bones where they are attached, as well as uncomfortable stretching of the muscles themselves. The term “high tone” refers to the presence of high tension in the muscles. This can occur with either strong or weak pelvic floor muscles, and can cause a wide range of problems.

Who is at risk of developing High Tone Dysfunction?

• People who do Kegels without adequate relaxation both during and in between exercises.
• Athletes, yoga, and Pilates enthusiasts who work out with a focus on core strength without adequate focus on core flexibility and relaxation.
• Women transitioning through menopause.
• Women with high-stress lifestyles and/or difficulty coping with stress, because this increases the likelihood of carrying tension in the pelvic floor muscles.
• Women who’ve had trauma to their pelvic floor either from surgery or traumatic sexual experiences.

What are the symptoms of High Tone Dysfunction?

• Pain as sexual arousal builds
• Pain with vaginal penetration
• Pain with orgasm
• Inability to tolerate wearing tampons or getting a pelvic exam
• Constipation and/or pain with bowel movements
• Painful urination and/or increased frequency of urination
• Ache in the pelvis from constant muscle stress on the lower spine and tail bone

What should I do if I think I have High Tone Dysfunction?

There are many conditions that are easily confused with High Tone Dysfunction, so we recommend you see your health care provider to obtain an accurate diagnosis. Once a medical diagnosis of pelvic floor dysfunction is made, a Physical Therapist (PT) or Occupational Therapist (OT) who specializes in the pelvic floor can do a thorough assessment and determine the exact portions of the pelvic floor that need attention. The therapist can perform treatment as well as teach you a series of individual exercises you can do at home, either alone or with the help of a partner, to facilitate normal coordination and flexibility of pelvic floor muscles. We recommend working with a therapist to help you determine if pelvic floor exercises are safe and appropriate for you.

Further Resources

www.sexualityresources.com, On our website, you can browse our online store, download all of our brochures at no charge, and read articles about sex and sexual health.

AVT How to Choose a Personal Lubricant brochure, and AVT Pelvic Floor Health for Men. Both are downloadable at the above web address.

A Headache in the Pelvis: A New Understanding and Treatment for Prostatitis and Chronic Pelvic Pain Syndromes, 5th ed by David Wise, PhD and Rodney Anderson, M.D.

Heal Pelvic Pain: a proven stretching, strengthening and nutrition program for relieving pain, incontinence, IBS and other symptoms without surgery. By Amy Stein, MPT.


A Woman’s Touch Sexuality Resource Center

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What is the Pelvic Floor?

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles that forms a supportive sling in the lower pelvis. This sling maintains the stability of the uterus, bowel, and bladder, and supports pelvic organs (intestines, bladder, rectum) from the vulva.

Some people go through life without problems, while others experience troublesome symptoms because their pelvic floor muscles are too weak, too tense, too inflexible, poorly coordinated, or a combination of these. No matter where you are in this spectrum, there are concrete steps you can take to prevent or treat either type of problem.

Preliminary Kegel exercises will help treat symptoms of a weak pelvic floor, prevent against future symptoms, and increase orgasmic intensity. These exercises, named after the doctor who developed them, increase the strength of the pelvic floor muscles by intentionally contracting and relaxing them in a series of repetitions.

First, Find the Muscles

There are a number of ways to learn to feel and identify your pelvic floor muscles. The best way is to insert one or two lubricated fingers into your vagina, and then squeeze your pelvic floor muscles until you feel them tightening and lifting into your vagina, and then squeeze your pelvic floor muscles.

If you're using your finger(s), push it in too far; it cannot get lost inside of you. If you're using a tool, coat it with lubricant and insert it into your vagina until it comfortably slips into place just behind the pubic bone. You can't push it too far, but it can't get lost inside of you. Sometimes, you may need a lubricant. We recommend using one that is water-soluble and non-irritating.

Some women like to use a specially designed tool—such as the Stone Exercise Egg or the Energetix Exerciser—that help identify the muscles and strengthen them effectively. If you use a tool in the beginning, you can learn to feel how your muscles are getting stronger.

Common Questions

How many Kegels should I do every day?

Start out doing 2 sets of 5 twice a day, holding each contraction for 5 seconds. Gradually increase the length of the hold until you can hold for 10 seconds. Next, increase the number that you do each time, until you can do 2 sets of 10, holding each for 10 seconds. If you continue to increase the number of Kegels you do, and hold them for longer periods of time, you may eventually be able to hold them for 1 minute or more.

5. IMPORTANT: After each contraction, take a deep belly breath for 5 seconds. Inhale deeply and gently blow out the air while you relax your pelvic muscles. The deep belly breath is just as important as the other steps because the deep belly breath relaxes the muscles that are not under your conscious control.

6. Congratulations, you have just done one Kegel.

Step-by-Step Kegels

1. Lie down on your back in a comfortable place with your knees bent. Lying down takes the weight off your pelvic floor and leads to earlier success. Have your tool (if you are using one) and lubricant with you.

2. If you’re using a tool, coat it with lubricant and insert it into your vagina until it comfortably slips into place just behind the pubic bone. You can’t push it in too far; it cannot get lost inside of you.

3. If you’re using your finger(s), wash your hands first, then coat your finger(s) with lubricant. Next, insert your finger(s) about 2 inches into your vagina.

4. You can also practice Kegels with nothing at all inside your vagina, or a hand placed on your perineum, to feel the muscle contract from the outside.

5. Contract your pelvic floor muscles. It will feel like you’re pulling up and inward on your belly button. Don’t push out unless specifically advised by a health care provider. If you’re using a tool, you should feel it lift a bit. If you’re using your finger, you should feel a gentle tightening around the finger. Try to keep your legs, buttocks, and abdominal muscles relaxed and remember to breathe normally throughout the exercise.

6. Hold the lift for a count of 5. If you’re using a tool, you can add resistance by pulling gently on it as you continue using your muscles to pull the tool inward and upward. Remember to breathe!

7. Relax your muscles.

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