



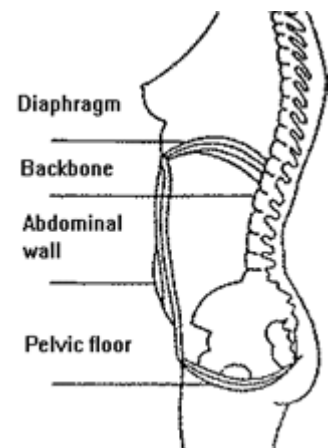
Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises in Pregnancy

The floor of the bones of the pelvis is made up of layers of muscle and other elastic tissue. The pelvic floor muscles (PFM) are like a sling from the pubic bone in front to the tailbone at the back. The stronger your pelvic floor muscles are during pregnancy the quicker they will recover after having your baby.

A strong pelvic floor muscle DOES NOT stop you pushing your baby out, it actually helps guide your baby out.

Use of pelvic floor muscles:

1. Supports the abdominal contents - bladder, uterus and bowel, preventing prolapses. They help in the support of your spine.
2. Squeezes on and around the openings - urethra, vagina and anus (back passage), preventing leakages from the bladder and bowel. They wrap around the openings to help keep them shut.
3. Helps guide the baby out during a vaginal delivery.
4. Keeps good vaginal tone for women so intercourse is enjoyable, with both partners able to feel more.



How to find your pelvic floor muscles

Hints. These are a semicircle of muscles ‘inside’ your pelvis which are thin and very elastic so:

- **Do not** use your buttocks, legs or hips.
- If you find yourself holding your breath, breathe out like through a straw.
- All you can see is a ‘tiny’ inward movement of your lower tummy and your perineum (the area between the anus and the vagina).
- All you will feel is a feeling of tightening around your front and back passages.
- Keep relaxed, this is a small muscle so don’t try too hard.
- Don’t rush your exercises, make sure you give your muscle time to let go and relax.



Exercise 1:

Try working the back of the PFM near your tailbone

(In pregnancy this can be easier than the front. This exercise helps haemorrhoids or anal pain)

- Sit tall and relax your shoulders. Lean backwards in the chair.
- Think about **gently** squeezing your anus/back passage (not buttocks) and pulling your back passage up towards your tailbone. Imagine that you are stopping passing wind or a stool.
- It should feel just like a wave going up inside towards your tailbone. You may also feel a little bit of movement around the front passage and your tummy may draw in a little.

Now practise: **lift and let go.**

- Do these ten times. Help your brain to remember the action by doing sets of ten throughout the day.
- Now **gently** try and hold that wave, so lift, lift and let go. Aim for a three second hold.
- As you get good at this, see if you can end up being able to hold for ten seconds and let go.

Exercise 2:

Working the front of the PFM near your pubic bone

(great for stopping urine leakages)

- Sit tall and relax your shoulders. Lean forwards in the chair.
- Gently draw your undercarriage up or imagine pulling all your front passages up off the chair. Feel the 'lift' like a wave up behind your pubic bone.

Now practise: **lift and let go.**

- Do these ten times; help your brain to remember the action by doing sets of ten throughout the day.
- Now **gently** try and hold that wave, so lift, lift, lift and let go, aim for a three second hold at first. Relax and breathe out fully to make sure your muscle lets go.

Exercise 3: Bringing exercise 1 and 2 together

If you are still struggling with the above exercises, try this way of doing it. Imagine you are bringing your back passage forwards to your front passage. Once you have got the action practise lift and let go till it becomes easy, ten in a row.

Ten quick PFMs back and front together, then ten strong contractions holding for up to ten seconds, three times a day is the perfect pelvic floor way!

Any problems?

Not sure how to work the muscles, any leakage, or a feeling of vaginal heaviness then ask at the Antenatal Clinic or your GP for a referral to the Women's Health Physiotherapist at OPH.

For more information:

- Australian Continence Foundation: Pregnancy and Pelvic Floor:

<http://www.continence.org.au/pages/pregnancy.html>

- Pelvic floor First by Continence Foundation:

<http://www.pelvicfloorfirst.org.au/>

Apps

An app for safe exercise in pregnancy from **pelvic floor first** is available free to download for iPhones and iPads through the [App Store](#). It's also available for Androids from [Google Play](#).

Free Pregnancy Pelvic floor Plan App is now available free to download for iPhones and iPads through the apple [App Store](#). The app is also available for Androids from [Google Play](#).

Free Squeezy App. <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/squeezy-nhs-physiotherapy/id700740791?mt=www.squeezyapp.co.uk/get-the-app/index.htm>

Androids and Apple produced by National Health Service UK.

For other helpful tips, please see:

- Good Bladder Habits in Pregnancy
- Good Bowel Habits in Pregnancy
- Exercise in Pregnancy

Produced by: Osborne Park Hospital www.oph.health.wa.gov.au

OPH Physiotherapy Department Phone: 9346 8439

OPH Antenatal Clinic Phone: 9346 8010

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

CAC Reviewed Dec 2016

© North Metropolitan Health Service August 2019

