Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Pelvic Floor Exercises for Female Patients

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Pelvic Floor Exercises for Female Patients

Patient Information

Adult Bladder and Bowel Service

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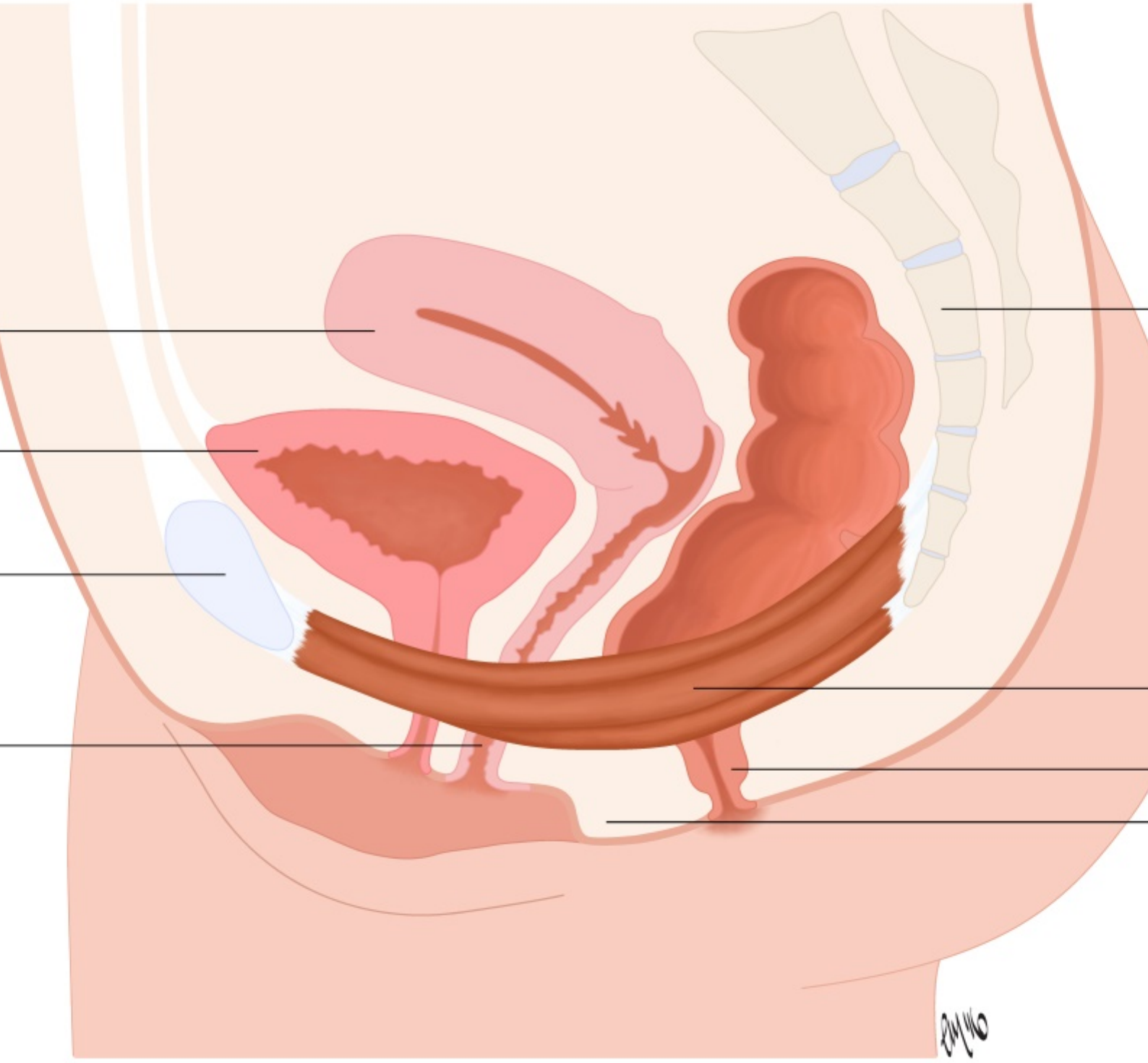
Pelvic floor problems

Many women experience pelvic floor problems at some time in their life.

The most common problems are urinary leaking and pelvic organ prolapse, but your pelvic floor also affects bowel control and sexual function.

Pelvic floor muscles

The pelvic floor muscles lie across the base of your pelvis to help keep the pelvic organs- bladder, uterus and bowel in the correct position.



The pelvic floor muscles work to help keep the bladder and bowel openings closed to prevent unwanted leakage and when we relax them it allows easy bladder and bowel emptying.

Common symptoms

Stress incontinence

Leaking urine, on coughing, laughing, sneezing and active exercise.

Prolapse

A feeling of something coming down inside the vagina or an aching dragging sensation.

Causes

- Pregnancy and childbirth
- Menopause
- Chronic cough
- Chronic Constipation
- Being overweight
- Repeated heavy lifting or poor lifting technique
- High impact exercise such as weight lifting

Pelvic floor muscles can be strengthened just like any other weak or damaged muscles. They need to be exercised regularly to work well.

How to exercise your pelvic floor muscles

- Tighten up your back passage as though you are trying to stop passing wind.
- Then tighten the muscles that you would use to stop yourself from passing wee (urine).
- Do these two together.

You can do this sitting, standing or lying down.

When doing this exercise:

Don’t squeeze your buttocks

Don’t hold your breath

Don’t stop the flow of wee when on the toilet

It is important to exercise these muscles in the following ways:

Slowly

Tighten the pelvic muscles and hold tight for as many seconds as you can up to 10 seconds.

Relax for 4 seconds.

Do this tightening and relaxing for as many times as you can up to 10 times.

Fast

Tighten the muscles for 1 second and relax for 1 second.

Try to do 10 of these.

How many times a day should these exercises be repeated?

- Three times a day
    - Always squeeze your pelvic floor muscles before you do anything that may put them under pressure, such as lifting, coughing or sneezing.

- Pelvic muscles are like any other muscles.

- You need to practice exercising them to get to full strength.

It can take up to 6 months.

Remembering to exercise

It is easy to forget your pelvic floor exercises. Make sure your exercises are part of your daily routine – just like brushing your teeth or taking your medication.

You should continue with the exercises for the rest of your life.

- Use coloured stickers / reminder notes in the house or at work.
- Use triggers such as when feeding the baby, boiling the kettle or waiting at traffic lights.
- Use advert breaks between television programmes.
- Set an alarm on your phone or watch.
- Download the Squeezy NHS Pelvic Floor App on your smart phone which alerts you and counts you through your programme.

Healthy Bladder and Bowel

The best way to keep your bladder healthy is to follow a few simple rules.

Drink enough fluid: 3 - 4 pints (2 litres) a day, more in hot weather or when exercising or breast-feeding.

If possible cut down on alcohol and caffeine drinks e.g. tea, coffee and cola.

Eat well: 5 portions of fruit or vegetable a day.

Bowels like routine: about ½ an hour after meals is the most usual time for a bowel action. Eating regular meals can help your bowel. Don’t miss breakfast

Relax! Don’t strain to empty your bladder or bowel. Women should sit on the toilet not ‘hover’ above it.

When you need to empty your bowel, go: Don’t ignore the feeling, this can lead to constipation

Never go to the toilet ‘just in case’. Go only when you really need to.

Exercise can help your bowel work regularly.

Know when you should get help. If you leak, feel pain when you empty your bladder or find blood in your wee (urine) or poo - see your doctor or nurse.

Other ways to help

If you are overweight, try to lose weight. Even quite small changes can help with symptoms.

Try to give up smoking as this can lead to a chronic cough.

Contact information

Continence Service

Hindley Health Centre

Liverpool Road

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WN2 3HQ

Tel: 01942 482497

Pelvic, Obstetrics and Gynaecological Physiotherapy (POGP) www.pogp.csp.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/conditions

Bladder and bowel UK www.bbuk.org.uk 0161 6 078 219



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