

VALLEY WOMEN'S CLINIC, PLLC

17722 Talbot Road South
Renton, WA 98055-5744
Appointments: 425-228-0722
Fax: 425-271-2566
www.valleywomens.com

Kegel Exercises for Bladder Control

What are Kegel exercises?

Kegel exercises are exercises that strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. These muscles help support your vagina, bladder, and urethra. The bladder is where your body stores urine. The urine flows out of your body through the tube called the urethra.

Why should I do Kegel exercises?

Strengthening your pelvic floor muscles will lessen and possibly prevent stress incontinence. Incontinence is the term used for frequent or severe leaking of urine from the bladder. Leaking of urine caused by coughing, laughing, sneezing, or physical activity is called stress incontinence.

What causes stress incontinence?

Weakened pelvic muscles may allow urine to leak. The muscles may be weakened by:

- childbirth
- aging
- loss of the female hormone estrogen after menopause
- diabetes mellitus
- extreme overweight
- frequent heavy lifting over time
- recurrent urinary tract infections.

How do I do Kegel exercises?

First, to feel the muscles you will use when you do Kegels, try starting and stopping the flow of urine when you urinate.

When you are not urinating, tighten these muscles and hold the contraction for 4 seconds. Do this 10 to 20 times. Allow the muscles to relax completely between contractions.

Do these sets of contractions 10 times a day. Performing fewer repetitions than this will lower the effectiveness of the exercises. You can do Kegel exercises anywhere: while sitting at a desk, waiting for a bus, washing dishes, driving a car, waiting in line, or watching television. No one will know you are doing them.

Many women see a change for the better after doing the Kegels for just a few weeks. However, you may not notice a lot of improvement until after 3 to 6 months of daily exercises. You should continue doing Kegels every day to keep the pelvic muscles strong.

You may want to ask your health care provider about cones that may be used to help you strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. The cones range in size. You may start with a large cone. You put it into your vagina and try to hold it in place for 15 minutes a couple times a day. When this is easy for you to do, you may then try keeping a smaller cone in place. Your health care provider can order the cones from a surgical supply company.

If you're over 50, talk to your health care provider about using estrogen cream. Using the cream and doing the Kegels will improve the strengthening of the muscles around the vagina and bladder.

Are there any other benefits of Kegel exercises?

An added benefit of Kegel exercises is that they improve vaginal muscle tone and sensation. This can make you more sexually responsive. However, the chief benefit of Kegel exercises is that they may help stop the leaking of urine.