

# Kegels

*Kegel exercises help tone & strengthen the pelvic floor muscles.*

Developed for female patients by Dr. Arnold Kegel in the 1940s, Kegel exercises are easy to do, can be done anywhere, and without anyone knowing.

Learning to isolate, tighten, and relax your pelvic muscles can help women feel more relaxed and calm during a pelvic exam. Doing Kegels regularly can also improve your overall sexual health, and may even prevent incontinence later in life.

## Isolating your pelvic muscles

To locate the muscles you need for Kegels, think about the process of peeing. The muscles you would squeeze to stop the flow of urine are the same muscles you'll strengthen with Kegels.

- Practice intentionally stopping the flow of urine in order to familiarize yourself with the muscles.
- Place a finger inside your vagina and see if you can squeeze it by contracting your pelvic muscles. Contract your muscles around your finger while taking care not to move your thighs, stomach, butt, or any other muscles in the region. (If those move, you're not squeezing the right muscles.)

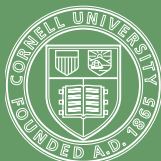
## Three Kegel exercises

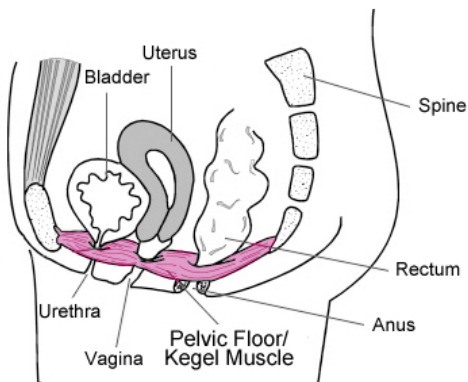
**Exercise #1:** Squeeze your pelvic muscles for 3 seconds; relax the muscles for 3 seconds; then squeeze again. If it is difficult to hold for 3 seconds, try 2 seconds and build up as the muscles get stronger. Aim for a series of 10 squeezes and releases, 3 times a day.

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**Exercise #2:** The “flutter” exercise is like the first except that instead of holding the squeeze for 3 seconds, the objective is to squeeze the muscle, release it, squeeze again and release as quickly as possible. Again, complete a series of 10 squeezes and releases at 3 different times during the day.

**Exercise #3:** Exercise the entire length of the vagina (uterine and pelvic muscles). Imagine that your vagina is an elevator shaft and the elevator is at the opening to the vagina.

Contract the muscles as you imagine yourself slowly pulling the elevator upward, along the vaginal canal, beginning at the opening and ending at the uterus.

After the 3-4 seconds it takes to go the entire length of the vagina, slowly relax the muscles as if you were lowering the elevator to the ground floor, and then begin again at the vaginal opening.

Do three series of 10 contractions daily. This exercise is good for strengthening the uterine muscles, as well as the pelvic muscles.

## **A life-long practice**

Try to make Kegel exercises as much of your daily routine as brushing your teeth. Like brushing, continue practicing these exercises throughout your life.

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