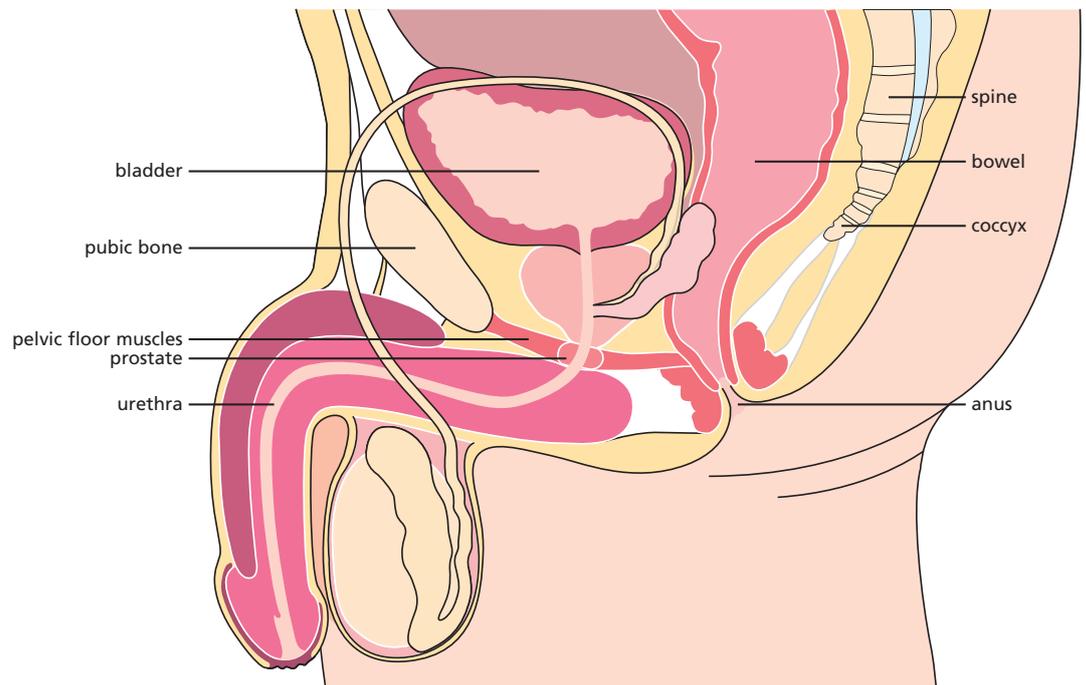
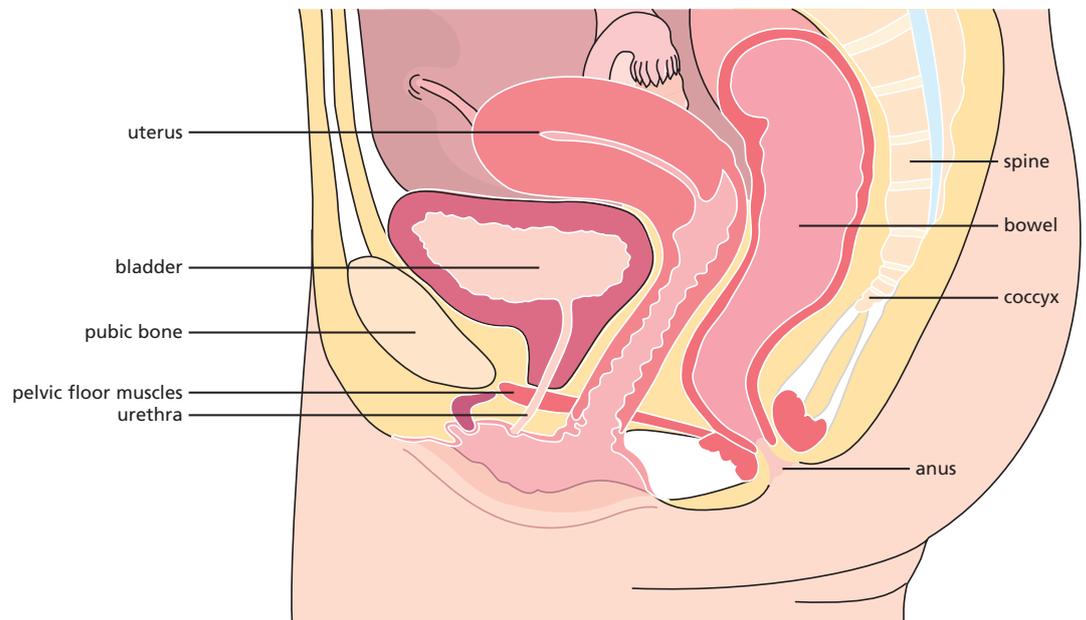




Pelvic floor muscle exercises (1)

This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) explains about your pelvic floor muscles and some exercises you can do to make them stronger.

Your pelvic floor muscles are vital for making your bladder work well. The diagram below shows where your pelvic floor muscles are located. They are at the base of your pelvis, below the bladder, and are shaped like a 'sling'. Both boys and girls have pelvic floor muscles. If your muscles are weak, you may leak urine in between wees. If they are too tight, you might find it difficult to wee so you don't empty your bladder completely when you go.



Tightening and relaxing your pelvic floor muscles

This exercise helps you become more aware of your pelvic floor muscles and how to tighten and relax them.

1. Find a comfortable position
 - Sitting or reclining in a chair
 - Laying back on your bed
2. Concentrate on how the chair or bed is supporting you
3. Relax into that support all the way down your body
4. Let your arms and legs go floppy and sink into the chair or bed
5. Notice your breathing – relax all your muscles as you breathe in and out
6. Concentrate on your pelvic floor muscles and gently tighten them – keep breathing slowly
7. Release the muscles gently – keep breathing slowly
8. Make sure your stomach and buttock muscles are staying relaxed – you are only tightening your pelvic floor muscles
9. Repeat this tightening and relaxing of your pelvic floor muscles three or four times

Practice this exercise two or three times a day until you find it easy to tighten and relax your pelvic floor muscles while keeping your stomach and buttock muscles relaxed and your breathing is slow and steady.

Strengthening your pelvic floor muscles

Inner thigh muscles

1. This exercise works on your inner thigh muscles, which in turn will strengthen your pelvic floor muscles.
2. Sit comfortably in a chair and breathe slowly
3. Place a ball between your legs just above your knees
4. Roll your knees inwards and push your heels apart
5. Lift your pelvic floor muscles up and in, tightening the muscles around your anus and urethra (and vagina if you're a girl)
6. Hold this for a count of 10
7. Relax your muscles and let your knees and heels go back to their usual position for a count of 10

Repeat these lifting and relaxing moves two or three times a day for about five minutes each time. Carry on doing this until it becomes easier – usually in seven days or so.





Outer thigh muscles

This exercise works on your outer thigh muscles, which in turn will strengthen your pelvic floor muscles.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair and breathe slowly
2. Place a stretchy band around your legs just above your knees
3. Roll your knees outwards and bring your heels together
4. Lift your pelvic floor muscles up and in, tightening the muscles around your anus and urethra (and vagina if you're a girl)
5. Hold this for a count of 10
6. Relax your muscles and let your knees and heels go back to their usual position for a count of 10

Repeat these lifting and relaxing moves two or three times a day for about five minutes each time. Carry on doing this until it becomes easier – usually in seven days or so.



Inner and outer thigh muscles together

You can also do both these exercises together to work on your inner and outer thigh muscles at the same time. Try this exercise when you can do the exercises separately with no problem.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair and breathe slowly
2. Place a ball between your legs and a stretchy band around them just above your knees
3. Roll your knees inwards and push your heels apart
4. Lift your pelvic floor muscles up and in, tightening the muscles around your anus and urethra (and vagina if you're a girl)
5. Hold this for a count of 10
6. Relax your muscles and let your knees and heels go back to their usual position for a count of 10
7. Roll your knees outwards and bring your heels together
8. Lift your pelvic floor muscles up and in, tightening the muscles around your anus and urethra (and vagina if you're a girl)
9. Hold this for a count of 10
10. Relax your muscles and let your knees and heels go back to their usual position for a count of 10

Repeat these lifting and relaxing moves two or three times a day for about five to seven minutes each time. Carry on doing this until it becomes easier – usually in seven days or so.



Quick squeeze and relax

This exercise strengthens the muscles fibres in the sphincters (rings of muscle) around your urethra and anus. These are important to stop leaks when you cough or sneeze.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair and breathe slowly
2. Squeeze your pelvic muscles as tight as you can as quickly as you can and then release them straightaway

Repeat this five to ten times before you start any other exercises and after you finish.

Tightening your pelvic floor muscles

This exercise works only on your pelvic floor muscles, tightening them without moving any other muscles. Start this exercise slowly, holding in and relaxing for five seconds, increasing to 10 seconds each time. You can then build up the number of repetitions as your muscles get stronger.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair and breathe slowly
2. Pull your pelvic muscles upwards and inwards without moving your tummy or buttock muscles
3. Hold them in for five seconds and then gradually relax them over five seconds

Repeat this four to five times. Carry on doing this until you can squeeze for 10 seconds and then increase the number of times you do the exercise.

Standing plié

You do this exercise standing up, perhaps while you're brushing your teeth or waiting for the kettle to boil. This exercise strengthens the pelvic floor muscles so that you don't have any leaks when you cough or sneeze.

1. Stand with your toes turned outwards and your heels together
2. Breathing slowly over five seconds, bend your knees while rolling your knees outwards
3. Gradually straighten your knees over another five seconds

Repeat this three to four times to start with, increasing to 10 repetitions during an exercise session.



Adapted from Hulme JA (2002) Beyond Kegels: Fabulous Four Exercises and More - To Prevent and Treat Incontinence: Phoenix Publishing

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