You can keep your pelvic floor muscles healthy by doing Kegel exercises every day. Your pelvic floor muscles support your vagina, rectum, and urethra. We recommend Kegels for all women, and they’re good for men, too.

Doing Kegels can help you prevent or correct urine leakage or an overactive bladder. They can also increase sexual enjoyment. After childbirth, Kegels help the pelvic floor muscles and organs recover.

**Learn to do Kegels**

The first step is to feel and activate your pelvic floor muscles.

- Place a hand over your perineum (the skin between your vagina and anus) and feel your perineum lift up as you squeeze your pelvic floor muscles.
- Place a finger inside your vagina and tighten the muscles around your finger. You can also ask your doctor to check your squeeze during a gynecologic exam.

We recommend that you don’t do these exercises on the toilet. It can make it difficult to empty your bladder.

**Do sets of Kegels every day**

- Tighten your pelvic floor muscles by feeling the muscles around your vagina and rectum pulling up and in. Your lower belly muscles may also pull in a bit.
- Let your thighs, buttocks, and stomach stay relaxed. Make sure to keep your breathing relaxed, also.
- Hold for 3 seconds while you breathe easily and normally. Relax your muscles and take 1 or 2 breaths. Repeat this sequence 10 times, for 1 set.
- Work up to doing 3 sets per day, every day. Try doing sets lying down, sitting, and standing.
Kegel exercises can help you control the 2 main types of urine leakage (incontinence):

- **Stress incontinence.** Coughing, laughing, sneezing, or other strong physical activity puts extra pressure on your bladder.

- **Urge incontinence.** You feel an overwhelming urge to urinate due to sudden, unexpected bladder contractions.

Kegel exercises strengthen the muscles around the urethra and control the flow of urine. The urethra is the tube where urine flows out from your bladder. Kegels also signal the bladder to relax. This allows you to get to the bathroom in time.

You can calm your bladder by doing Kegels when you feel an unexpected urge to urinate.

Your incontinence symptoms may improve 2 to 3 weeks after starting Kegels. Many women improve in 6 to 8 weeks.

Continue doing Kegels every day to keep incontinence problems from returning.

**Contact us if you:**
- Continue to have symptoms.
- Have problems doing Kegels.
- Have pain in your pelvis or pelvic floor muscles.