

How do I know that I am doing the Pelvic Floor Exercises correctly?

To check if you are doing the Pelvic Floor Muscle exercises correctly,

- o Stand in front of the mirror (with no clothes on) and tighten your pelvic floor muscles.
- o If you are tightening the right muscles, you should see the base of the penis draw in and scrotum lift up.
- o The back passage will tighten too but it is not the focus of the exercise.
- o When you relax your muscles you should feel a sensation of 'letting go'.

Remember:

After some weeks the muscles will start to feel stronger and you will notice an improvement so don't give up!

Continue doing the pelvic floor exercises as part of your everyday routine, to stop the incontinence recurring.

Doing the pelvic floor exercises each day will help to keep the pelvic floor muscles strong and toned up.

Are there any other times when I should do the exercises?

- o A fast pull-up pelvic floor exercise can be done before and during strenuous activities such as running, lifting, sneezing.
- o Use a strong pelvic floor squeeze to reduce a sudden urge to empty the bladder. In time this will help to reduce the frequent urge to pass urine.
- o After passing urine, tighten your pelvic floor muscles strongly to avoid after dribble. If dribbling persists, try massaging or 'milking' the urethra behind the scrotum to help to remove the last few drops that often dribble out a minute or so after you have passed urine.

Fluids

- It is recommended that you drink 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid each day, (about 6– 8 mugs /glasses), unless otherwise advised by your doctor. Water is best.
- Avoid or greatly reduce tea, coffee, fizzy drinks and alcohol as they can irritate the bladder.

Stop Smoking

May cause coughing which can aggravate the symptoms of incontinence. It would help to stop smoking.

A healthy balanced diet high in dietary fibre

Make sure your diet is well balanced and high in fibre. Eating 5-7 portions of fruit and vegetables helps to prevent constipation and maintain a healthy body weight.

Exercise

Exercise regularly to help prevent constipation and maintain a healthy body weight.

Walking is a great way to start getting back into exercise, but you should consult your doctor before you return to vigorous sport or exercise.

Overweight/Obesity.

Stress incontinence is common if you are overweight or obese. Weight loss is advised if you are overweight or obese, and can improve urine incontinence.

Practice good toilet habits

Practice good toilet habits to prevent bladder and bowel control problems.

Go to the toilet when your bladder feels full. Don't get in to the habit of going just in case.

After prostate surgery you may find that you do not experience the sensation of a full bladder.

The sensation of a full bladder will gradually return as you are able to hold on longer. It is important to practice holding on to increase the amount of urine your bladder can hold.

Make going to the toilet as easy as possible, you may need to consider a hand rail or a raised seat in your toilet to help you. Sometimes a commode in the bedroom makes life much easier.

Wear loose clothing.

Remember, incontinence can be treated, managed and in many cases cured.

For further help and information contact

Your GP, Public Health Nurse, Continence Advisory Service.

www.hse.ie/continencecare

Developed by Margaret Tiernan & Patricia Dever, Continence Advisors Roscommon & Mayo PCCC.

Adapted from 'Continence and Prostate' Continence Foundation of Australia, Urinary Incontinence after radical prostatectomy Irish Cancer Society.



A Guide for Men Following Prostate Surgery

This leaflet is best used on the advice of a Healthcare Professional.

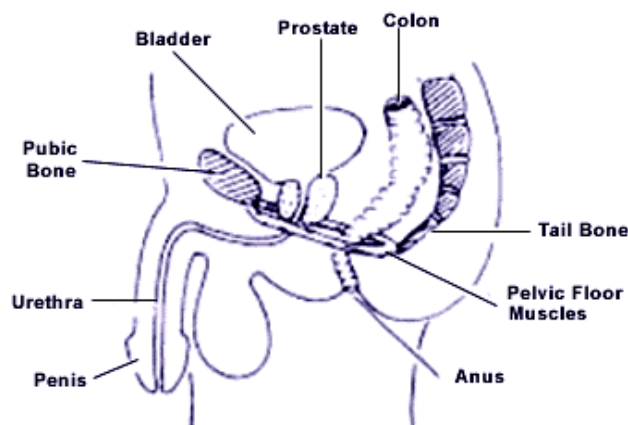
Continence management following prostate surgery

Bladder weakness, or urinary incontinence, is experienced by many men following surgery for prostate cancer. This is a common problem, however many men find this the biggest challenge they have to cope with during the recovery process.

Most men regain their bladder control over time and continue to improve for up to one year following surgery. This leaflet will provide you with helpful ways to improve and manage your incontinence following prostate surgery.

What is incontinence?

Incontinence refers to the accidental leaking of urine and can occur after prostate surgery.



Why does it happen?

- The prostate gland is about the size of a walnut and sits at the base of the bladder.
- Surgery to remove the prostate gland (radical prostatectomy) affects the muscle at the top of the prostate, (the internal bladder sphincter) that controls continence.

- The external bladder sphincter is another sphincter that controls continence and is part of the set of muscles below the prostate called the pelvic floor. These muscles are also involved in bladder control.
- If the bladder sphincters are damaged during prostate cancer surgery, the pelvic floor muscles are relied on more often to control the bladder.
- If the pelvic floor muscles are weak urinary incontinence may happen.

What are the symptoms?

- Urinary incontinence usually occurs when you undertake activities that increase the pressure inside the abdomen, and push down on the bladder.
- If the pelvic floor muscles (attached to external sphincter) are weak or not working well, urine will leak out.

This is known as 'stress incontinence'.

Typical activities that can cause leakage are:

- Coughing.
- Sneezing.
- Laughing.
- Lifting, pushing, pulling.
- Walking.
- Moving from lying to sitting or sitting to standing positions.

How can the problem be treated?

There are a number of ways to help with the problem

- **Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises**
These exercises strengthen the pelvic floor muscles, so that they can give the bladder and rectum (lower bowel) support. This will improve your bladder or bowel control and improve or stop any leaking.

What are the Pelvic Floor Muscles?

The pelvic floor muscles provide a 'hammock' or 'sling' at the base of the pelvis that supports the bladder, and rectum and helps to keep the openings of the bladder and back passage closed.

What weakens the Pelvic Floor Muscles and causes stress incontinence?

Surgery

Males who had surgery to reduce or remove the prostate gland.

Overweight and obesity

Being overweight or obese puts more pressure on the pelvic floor muscles.

Bowel movement/Constipation

Straining to have a bowel movement like 'pushing down' can over stretch your pelvic floor muscles and make the muscles weaker.

Chronic Cough.

Chronic cough such as a smokers cough or a persistent cough, can damage and overstretch the muscles.

Increasing Age

It is common with increasing age as the muscles become weaker.

How can I exercise my Pelvic Floor Muscles?

The aim is to do the exercises 10 times each 3 times per day.

There are **two types** of pelvic floor exercises one type of exercise helps the muscles work longer without getting tired and **helps to strengthen** the muscles,

The other type **trains the power** of the muscles which helps to prevent leakage of urine when coughing, laughing, sneezing and doing physical activity.

It takes **time, effort and practice** to do the exercises correctly.

Learning to Exercise the Pelvic Floor Muscles:

These exercises can be done lying, standing or sitting.

- o If sitting, sit in a chair with your knees slightly apart.
- o Breathe normally, do not hold your breath.
- o Imagine you are trying to stop wind escaping from your back passage.
- o You will have to squeeze the muscles around the back passage. You should feel some movement in the muscles.
- o Don't move your buttocks or legs.
- o At the same time imagine you are passing urine and are trying to stop the flow of leaking urine. Squeeze the muscles around the opening from where you pass urine.
- o Start by holding the muscles for as long as you can. Don't worry if this is only 2-3 seconds at the beginning, with practice you can aim to hold for 10 seconds.
- o Try to repeat this hold until you get tired.
- o The aim is to hold for 10 seconds and then relax the muscles for 4 seconds. Repeat 10 times

These are called **slow exercises** or **slow pullups** and will help to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles.

- o Now try to squeeze the same muscles quickly and hold for about 1-2 seconds, then let go quickly. Making sure you let go completely each time, try to repeat this exercise up to 10 times.

These are called **fast exercise** or **fast pullups**. You should feel a quick lift in your muscles with fast exercises or fast pullups.

- o Remember do not use your tummy, buttocks, or leg muscles when doing any of the exercises.