

- 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.
- Try to repeat this hold until you get tired.
- 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 pull-ups** and will help to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles.
- Now try to squeeze the same muscles quickly and hold for about 1-2 seconds, then let go quickly. Making sure you let go quickly each time, try to repeat this exercise up to 10 times.
These are called **fast exercise** or **fast pull-ups**. You should feel a quick lift in your muscles with fast exercise or fast pull-ups.
- Remember do not use your tummy, buttocks, or leg muscles when doing any of the exercises.

To check if you are doing the Pelvic Floor Exercises Correctly:

A woman can put 2 of her fingers into her vagina. She should feel a gentle squeeze when doing the exercises.

A man can check with a mirror to see if his scrotum moves slightly up when he is doing the exercises.

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.

Some general lifestyle behaviors that helps

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

Going to the toilet
Make going to the toilet as easy as possible. Consider a hand rail or a raised seat in your toilet. Sometimes a commode in the bedroom makes life much easier. Wear loose clothing.

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.

Constipation
Increase fibre in diet, eating 5-7 portions of fruit and vegetables per day, helps to prevent constipation.

Fluids
Drink 8 glasses of fluids per day, water is best. Avoid or greatly reduce tea, coffee, fizzy drinks, alcohol as these can irritate the bladder.

Other Treatments

Medication
Medication may be prescribed by your doctor, if pelvic floor exercises alone are not helping to treat your stress incontinence.

Surgery
Various surgical operations are used to treat stress incontinence. They tend only to be used when the pelvic floor muscle exercises have not helped. The operations aim to tighten or support the muscles and structures below the bladder.

Remember, incontinence can be treated, managed and in many cases cured. You are not alone help is available don't suffer in silence

For further help and information contact
Your GP, Public Health Nurse, Continence Advisory Service.
www.hse.ie/continencecare

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Adapted from patient.co.uk leaflet.

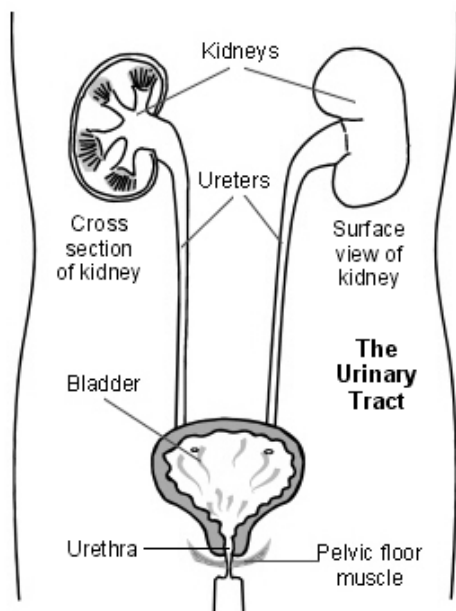


STRESS INCONTINENCE

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

- Stress incontinence is the most common form of incontinence. It means you leak urine when you cough, sneeze, laugh or exercise because there is a sudden extra pressure within the abdomen and on the bladder.
- Weakened pelvic floor muscles cannot support the bladder and urethra, so small amounts of urine may leak, but sometimes it can be quite a lot and can cause embarrassment.

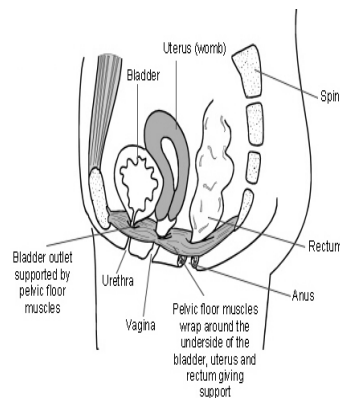
Understanding the urinary system



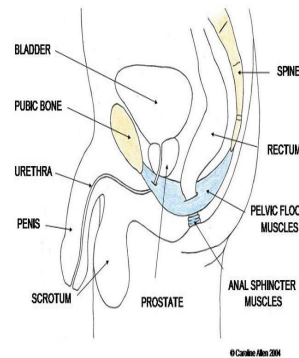
What are the Pelvic Floor Muscles?

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

Side view of a woman's bladder and related structures



Side view of a man's bladder and Related structures



What weakens the Pelvic Floor Muscles and causes Stress Incontinence?

Childbirth

Stress incontinence is common in women who have had children, particularly if they had several vaginal deliveries as the pelvic floor muscles become weak following childbirth. Tears and cuts to the perineum during childbirth can further weaken the pelvic floor muscles.

Increasing Age

It is common with increasing age as the muscles become weaker. For women this happens particularly after the menopause.

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 the muscles become weaker.

Surgery

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

Chronic Cough.

Chronic cough such as a smoker's cough or a persistent cough, can damage and overstretch the muscles.

Can Stress Incontinence be Prevented?

For women doing regular pelvic floor exercises during pregnancy and after the baby is born, reduces the risk of stress incontinence developing following childbirth and in later life.

Stress Incontinence may occur in later life for both women and men. Doing regular pelvic floor exercises greatly reduces this risk.

What are the treatments for Stress Incontinence?

Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises

This involves strengthening the pelvic floor muscles, so that they can give the bladder, vagina, womb and rectum in a woman and bladder, rectum in a man support. This will improve your bladder or bowel control and improve or stop any leaking.

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

There are two types of pelvic floor muscle 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.

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

Learning to Exercise the Pelvic Floor Muscles:

These exercises can be done lying, standing or sitting.

- If sitting, sit in a chair with your knees slightly apart.
- Breathe normally do not hold your breath.
- Imagine you are trying to stop wind escaping from your back passage.
- You will have to squeeze the muscles around the back passage. You should feel some movement in the muscles.
- Don't move your buttocks or legs.
- 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.