

# Kegel Information Sheet

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles that form a sling that supports the uterus, bowel, and bladder. Just as you would tone any other muscle group, you can strengthen your pelvic floor muscles by doing Kegel exercises. Named after the gynecologist who developed it, this exercise is advantageous during pregnancy and has other lifelong health benefits for both women and men.

## Benefits for Women

- Decreases risk of developing hemorrhoids and leaking urine in late pregnancy
- Prepares the pelvic floor for childbirth
- Improves healing of the perineum from episiotomy
- Helps to prevent urinary incontinence as you get older
- Helps to prevent prolapse of pelvic organs
- Can increase sexual pleasure for you and your partner

## Benefits for Men

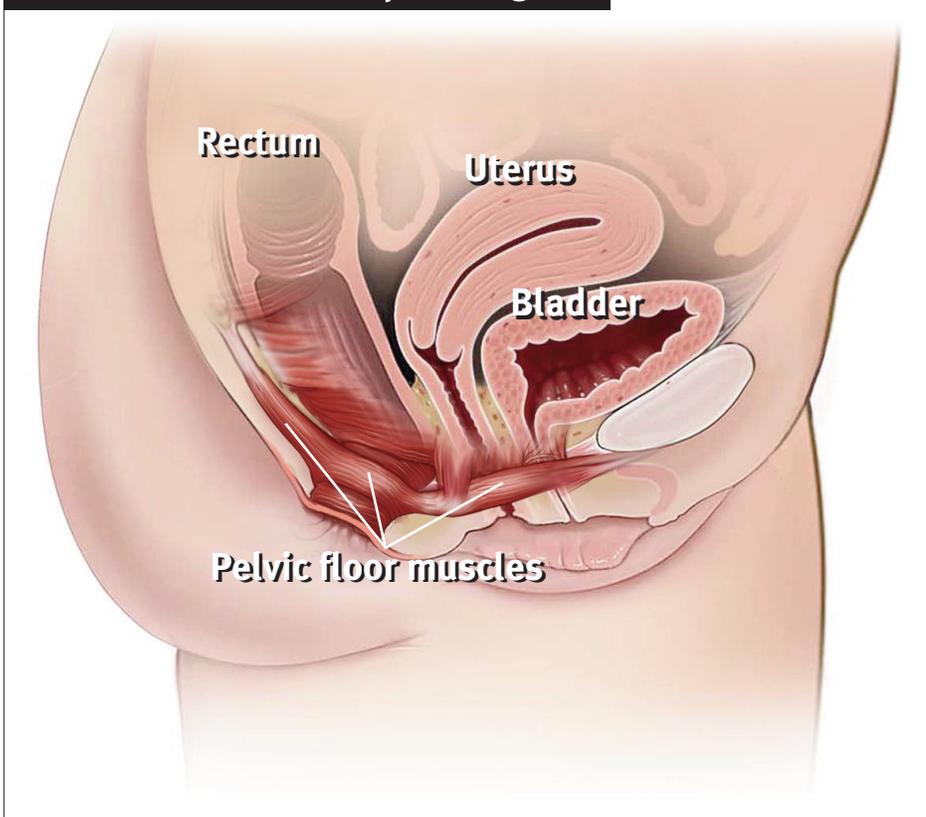
- Can increase bowel and bladder control
- Can increase sexual pleasure and function

## How to do Kegels

First, identify your pelvic floor muscles. One way to do this for women and men is to contract the muscles that stop the flow of urine. (However, avoid doing Kegels while urinating, which can actually weaken the muscles. Only do Kegel exercises with an empty bladder.)

- Contract the muscles and hold for 2-5 seconds, then release them (be careful not to contract the muscles in your abdomen, thighs, or buttocks)
- Repeat 10 of these in a row, three times a day
- Breathe regularly and relax when you're doing them
- Find a regular time to do Kegels each day, such as while you're stopped at a red light or checking email

## Side view of a female's pelvic organs



## Variations

- Contract the muscles more quickly and increase the number of repetitions (try to count to 20 quickly and contract with each count)
- Contract the muscles for 10 seconds or more at a time, and then rest for 10 seconds or more before contracting again
- Try the “elevator exercise”: tighten the pelvic floor muscles in four or five increments until they are fully contracted (like an elevator going up and stopping briefly at each floor), and then reverse the movement to the relaxed “first floor” position