

# Urology

## Kegel Exercises for Women



**Kegel exercises are considered excellent therapy for women having urinary stress and urge incontinence.**

Kegel exercises were originally developed by a gynecologist, Dr. Arnold Kegel, in the late 1940's to help women strengthen their muscles used in childbirth and to prevent stress incontinence. This exercise routine strengthens the urinary sphincter muscles, decreasing incontinence and aids in suppressing urges.

### **Finding the Correct Muscles**

Before you start a Kegel exercise regimen, you need to figure out which muscles are the correct muscles to focus on. A good way is to sit on the toilet and begin to urinate. After you have urinated for a few seconds, try to stop your urine stream without bringing your legs together. Is it recommended NOT to try to stop your urine stream during full force, but when pressure eases off. You will have much better control at the time. If you are successful, you have actually tightened the urinary sphincter. It may take more than one try to locate the right muscle group.

### **Performing Kegel Exercises**

Kegel Exercises are performed by tightening and relaxing the vagina or rectum or both at the same time. If you cannot feel a contraction in the vaginal area, you may contract the rectum because the right muscles to contract wrap around both areas. Squeeze gently, like a pucker, or holding back urine or "gas" or bowel movement. You do not have to attempt to squeeze as tight as possible, just what is comfortable. Otherwise, you use inappropriate muscles of the abdomen or legs. You may want to place your hand on your abdomen or legs to monitor the way you squeeze. These muscles should not move. Breathe normally. Count out loud if you need to. Stay relaxed. Remember that Kegels can be performed anytime, anywhere. If you are performing these exercises appropriately, no one knows you are doing them.

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### Your Kegel Exercise Program

In the beginning, you may want to perform your exercises with an empty bladder. Do not set yourself up for failure, you may leak. Start exercises in a sitting position, preferably a hard surface chair, so you can feel yourself contract the vagina or rectum. You may perform exercises in a lying position, but bend your knees if performing exercises in this position. You may progress to a standing position or when walking. After mastering Kegels, consider what makes you leak and practice with a cough, lifting, sudden movements, walking, or sports. Contract your muscles first, hold during an activity, then relax.

Squeeze your muscles for a count of 10 seconds if you can. If this is not possible, attempt for at least 5 seconds and gradually build to 10 seconds. Then relax for the same amount of time. You may contract for greater than 10 seconds or even some quick, controlled, 2-3 second flick type squeezes to suppress an urge. Begin with 15 repetitions, then quickly progress to at least 30 repetitions, three times a day. Time yourself to perform exercises for about 10 minutes, three times a day for stress incontinence. You only need a few when attempting to control a strong urge. Remember that the pelvic muscles can tire like any other muscle. Do Not Overdo. Kegel exercises are likely like any other exercise routine. Results are not automatic. You should notice improvement with 2-8 weeks with consistent exercise.

