

Pelvic Floor Muscle Relaxing

What You Should Know

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles that surround the urethra (the tube that urine passes through). When they tighten, they help prevent urine leaks. Strong pelvic floor muscles can help prevent leakage and calm the urge to pass urine. Sometimes these muscles can be too tight, which can cause urine leaks, trouble emptying your bladder and pain during sex.

While Kegel exercises are often used to strengthen the pelvic floor, if pelvic pain or tension is present, relaxation exercises (or “Reverse Kegels” as they are sometimes called) may help.

How Do You Relax Your Pelvic Floor Muscles?

There are a couple of ways you can relax your pelvic floor muscles.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

This type of deep breathing involves the diaphragm and pelvic floor working together to promote relaxation of this muscle group. The goal is to reduce pelvic pain which can help the muscles function better.

1. Start by placing one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach.
2. Breathe in deeply for three seconds, then breathe out for four seconds. You should feel your stomach rise and fall as you breathe in and out.
3. Repeat for 5-10 minutes every day.

The pelvic floor muscles relax as you breathe in and as you breathe out, your pelvic muscles return to their starting position.

Stretches

Stretching can also be a good way to open up the pelvic floor muscles and allow for deeper relaxation. A few common types of stretches include:

- **Happy Baby Pose** – While lying on your back, open your knees wide and pull toward your head. You can either hold your legs with your arms on/behind your knees or at your ankles. Hold this position or gently roll from side to side.
- **Child’s Pose** – On your hands and knees, spread your knees wide and keep your toes touching. Lean forward gently and place your upper body between your legs. Stretch your arms out in front of you.
- **Adductor Stretch** (Lying Butterfly Pose) – Relax on your back with the bottoms of your feet together and let your knees relax out to the sides. You can place pillows under your knees for support if needed.
- **Piriformis Stretch** (Thread the Needle Pose) – While lying on your back with your knees bent, place your left ankle on your right knee. Pull your right thigh into your chest. You should feel a stretch on the outside of your left hip. Repeat on the other side.

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“Quick Flicks” Exercise

A special exercise called “quick flicks” can help women who need to relax their pelvic floor. This exercise uses the same pelvic floor muscles used in Kegels to relax the bladder.

To do “quick flicks,” you quickly squeeze and relax your pelvic floor muscles over and over. When you feel the urge to pass urine, try a number of “quick flicks” instead. These exercises can help control that “got to go” feeling. It helps to be still, relax and focus on just the exercise.

Your doctor or a pelvic floor physical therapist can help you learn these deep breathing, relaxation exercises and stretches. A physical therapist can also offer other techniques like biofeedback. Biofeedback uses computer graphs and sounds to monitor muscle movement. It can help teach you how your pelvic floor muscles move and how strong they are.

It is good to have strong pelvic floor muscles, but it is also good to know when relaxing your pelvic muscles may be a better option for your condition.

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