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.
“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.

About the Urology Care Foundation

The Urology Care Foundation is the world’s leading urologic foundation – and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make health changes. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts.

To learn more, visit UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions or to go UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist to find a doctor near you.

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This information is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please talk to your urologist or health care provider about your health concerns. Always consult a health care provider before you start or stop any treatments, including medications.

For more information, visit UrologyHealth.org/Download or call 800-828-7866.