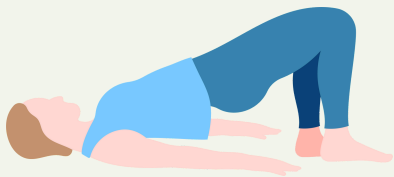


IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PELVIC FLOOR



WHAT IS IT?

The pelvic floor muscles act as a hammock to cradle and support the uterus, bladder, bowel and other pelvic organs. They form a figure of 8 around the urethra, vagina and anus.

During pregnancy, pelvic floor muscles bear extra load due to the growing uterus and this can make them weaker and dysfunctional.

During labour and delivery, the pelvic floor relax to allow the baby to move down the birth canal. The hormone, relaxin, helps improve the elasticity of the pelvic floor. However, a considerable amount of stretching is still required. A strong pelvic floor will help turn and push your baby out during labour and help healing postpartum. Remember, it's never too late to work on your pelvic floor!

HOW DO I KNOW HOW STRONG MY PELVIC FLOOR IS?

Any of the symptoms below could suggest a weak pelvic floor

-Accidentally leaking urine when exercising, laughing, coughing or sneezing

-Urgency to go to the toilet

-Difficulty in emptying the bladder or bowl

-Accidentally passing wind



WHEN SHOULD I DO PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES?

Try and work up to doing around 50 repetitions per day. Try and fit them into your daily routine, like doing them while you are stuck in traffic or watching TV.

Some women have found it helpful to put little stickers around the house and do a few exercise every time they see one.



SLOW EXERCISE OPTION 1

- Sit or lie comfortably with your knees slightly apart, Pull up the muscles surrounding your back passage, then pull up towards the front. Hold and count to five, remembering to breathe normally.
- Double - check that you aren't pulling in your buttock muscles by placing your hand on your bottom as you do the exercises. It's OK if you're tensing your lower abdominal muscles slightly.
- When you find this exercise easy, try holding for a longer count, up to a maximum of ten.
- With these exercises, quality is better than quantity: its much better to do a few good ones at a time

SLOW EXERCISE OPTION 2

1. Imagine your pelvic floor is like a lift. tighten the muscles around the anus and vagina, as if the closing the doors in a lift. Now tighten a little more, as if you're going up to the first floor, then the second, and then gently come back down to the ground again, making sure you keep breathing normally throughout.
2. Try coughing or blowing into your fist. you will feel the muscles of your pelvic floor being pushed down. this will also happen when your baby's head starts to move down the birth canal during the second stage of labour. knowing how to relax these muscles will help you give birth to your baby



FAST EXERCISE

Try tightening and then relaxing your pelvic floor muscles as quickly as you can, 5-6 times in a row.

These are the muscles that contract instantly when you cough or sneeze to resist the rise in abdominal pressure.

Before you cough, sneeze lift or laugh, try to take a moment to pull these muscles up

AFTER GIVING BIRTH



Resuming pelvic floor exercises as soon as possible after giving birth will help reduce swelling and speed up the healing process. If you have had stitches, you may wish to start the exercises lying down and work your way up to doing them whilst sitting.

Continuing with your pelvic floor exercises until you feel they are completely back to normal is really beneficial. then, doing them for the rest of your life will help prevent problems in later life such as prolapsed uterus or bladder.

However, as busy mummies I completely understand that 50 repetitions a day is a tough ask! Try and set yourself a goal of once a week to keep those muscles in check!