

Toning your pelvic floor



WELCOME

Introductions

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Continence Foundation of Australia

National peak body promoting bladder and bowel health



**Continence
Foundation
of Australia**

NATIONAL
CONTINENCE
HELPLINE

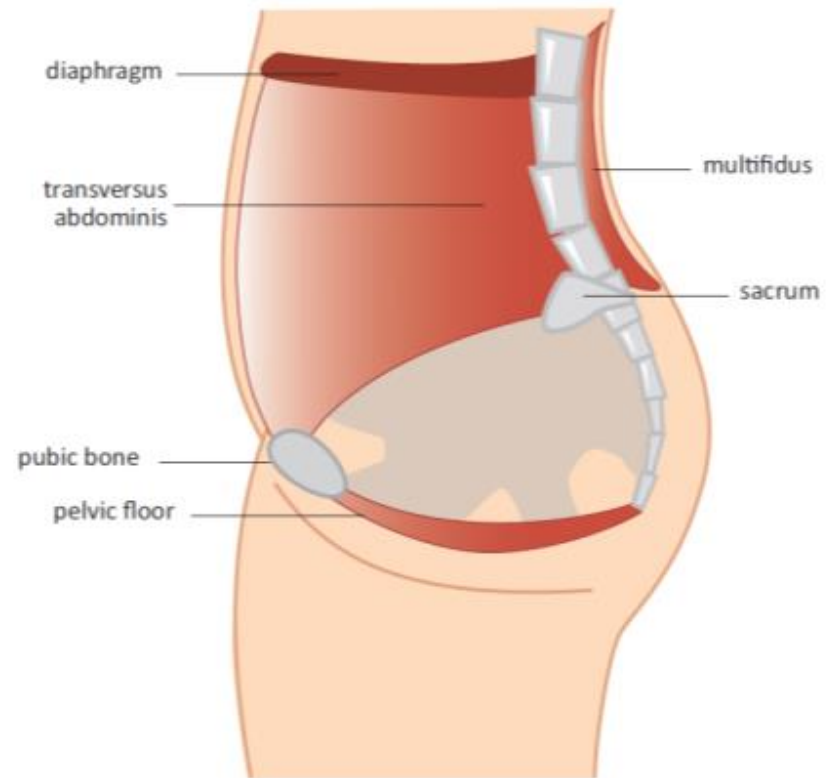
1800 33 00 66

Today we will cover:

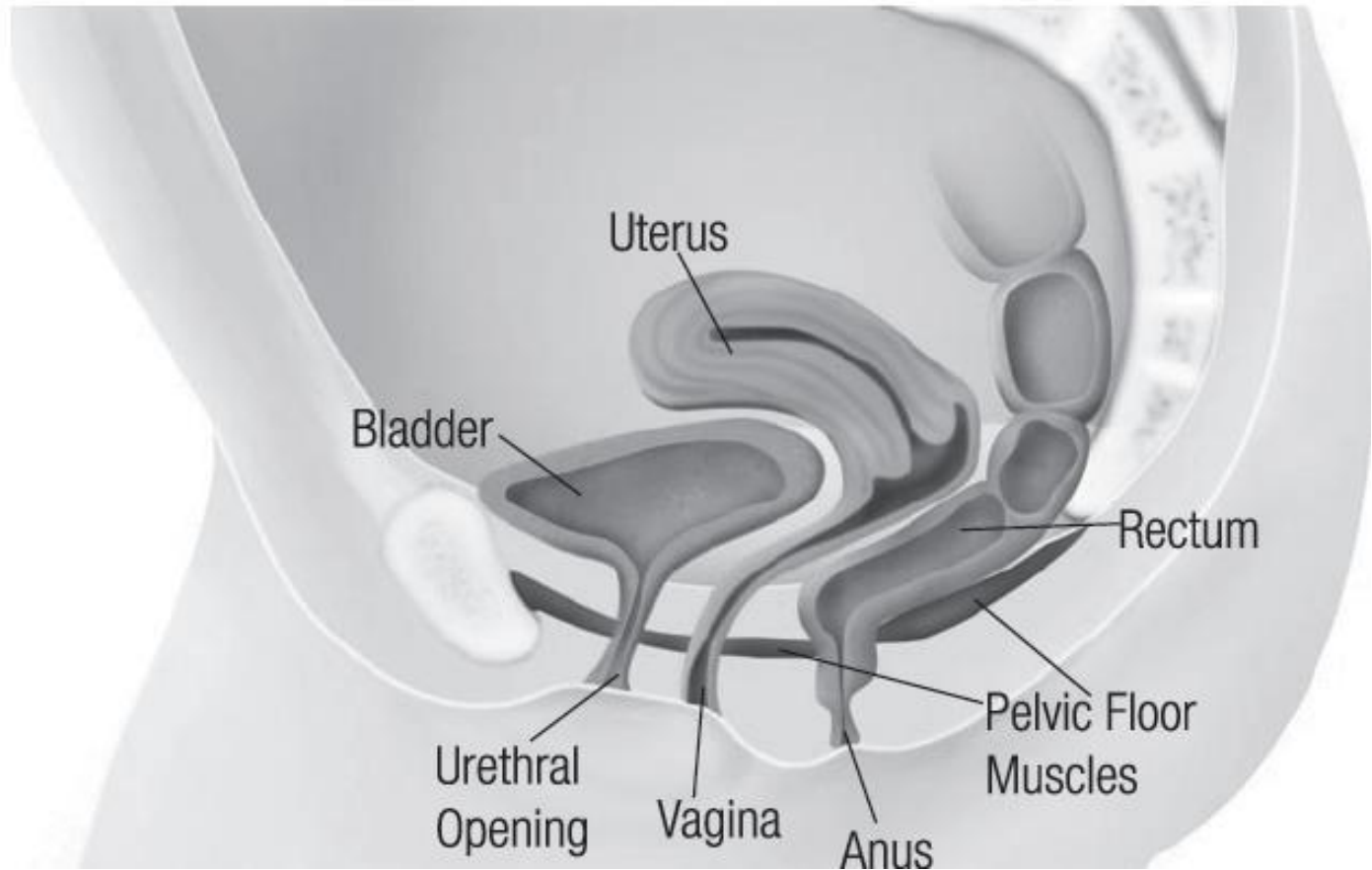
- What is your pelvic floor?
- Conditions related to your pelvic floor
Looking after your pelvic floor
- Healthy bladder and bowel habits
- Where to get help

What Is The Pelvic Floor?

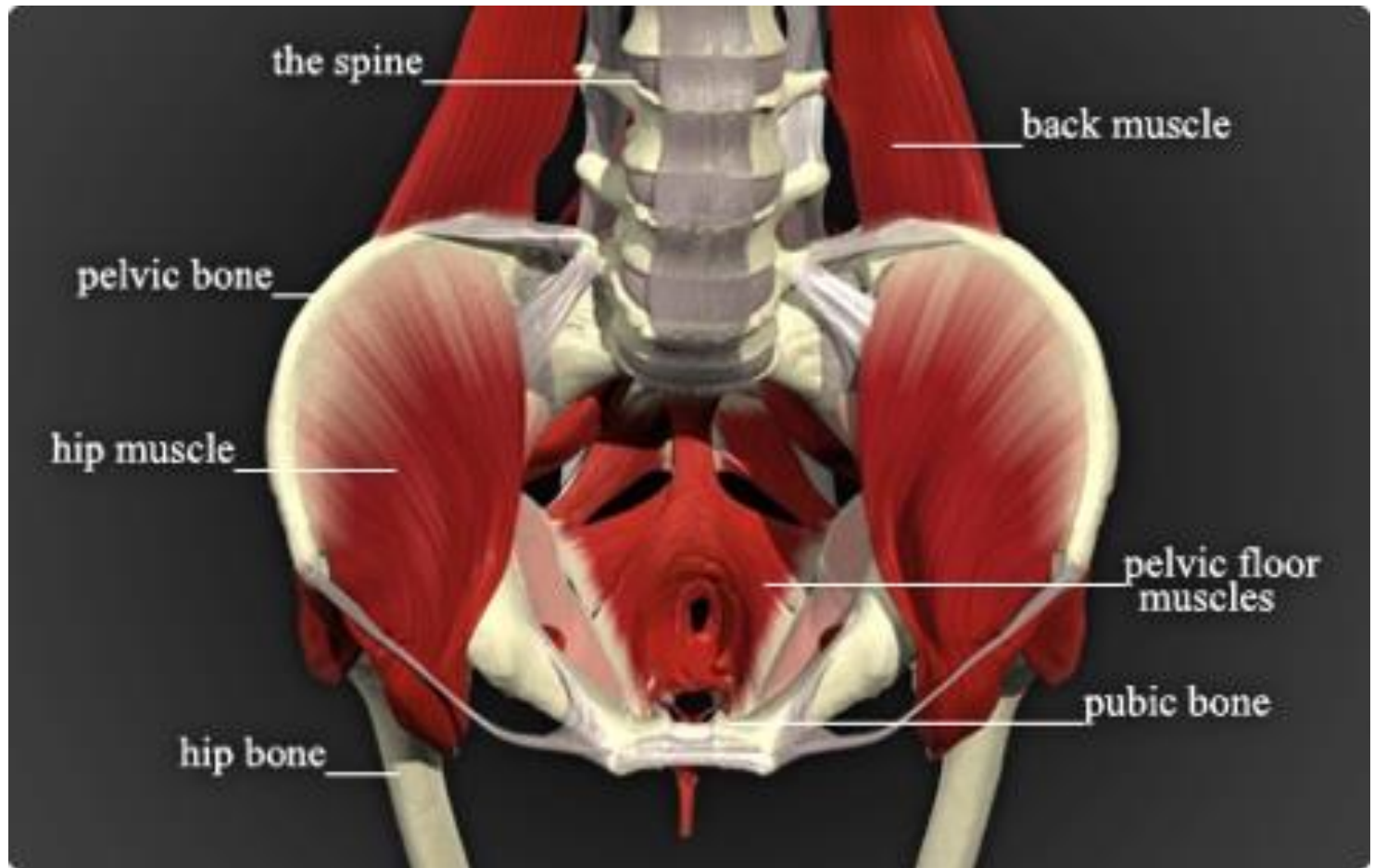
- The pelvic floor is a collection of muscles, nerves, blood vessels and fascia (support tissue) in the base of the pelvis
- The pelvic floor is the base of the group of muscles referred to as your “core”

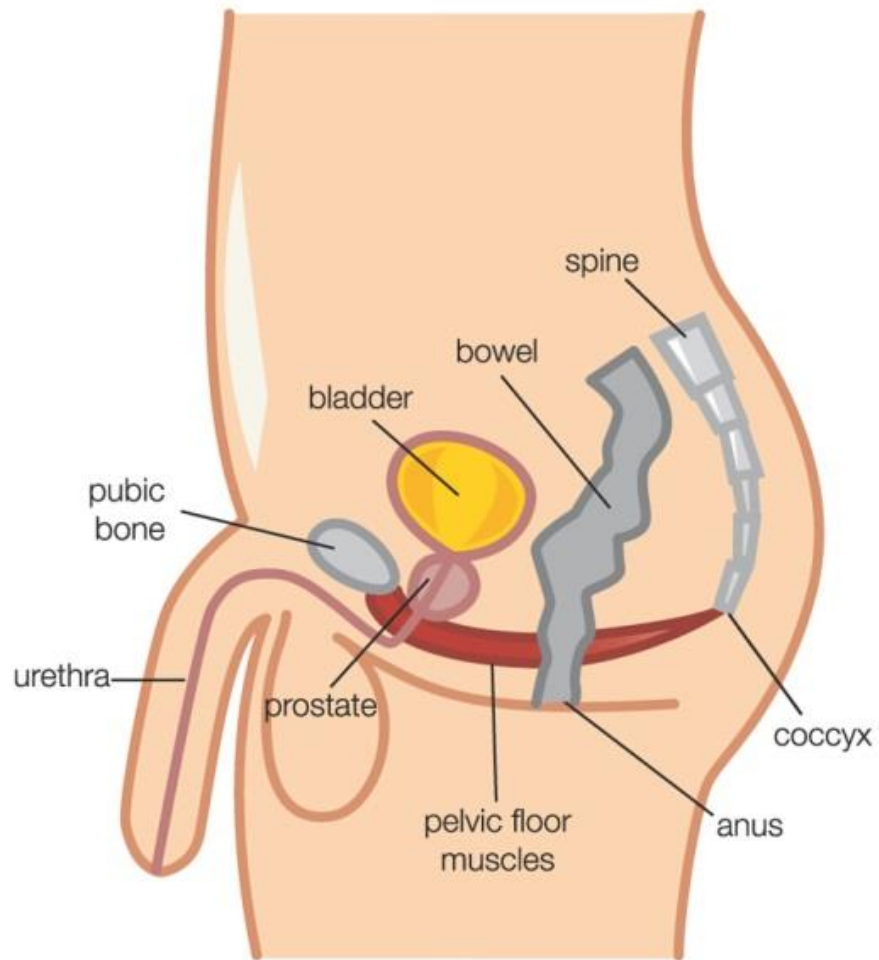


The Pelvic Floor



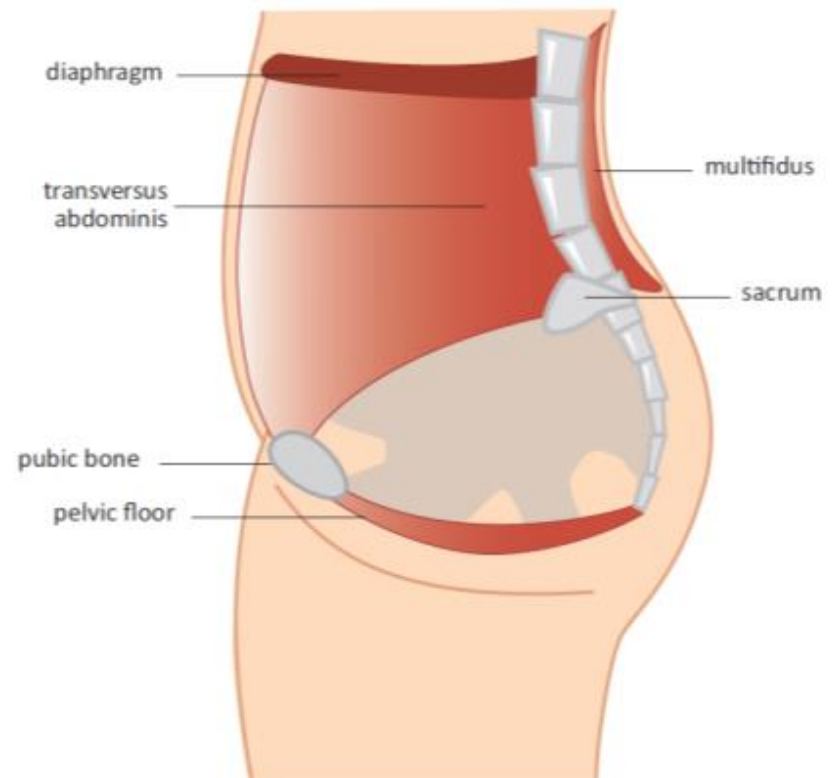
The Pelvic Floor A Bird's Eye View





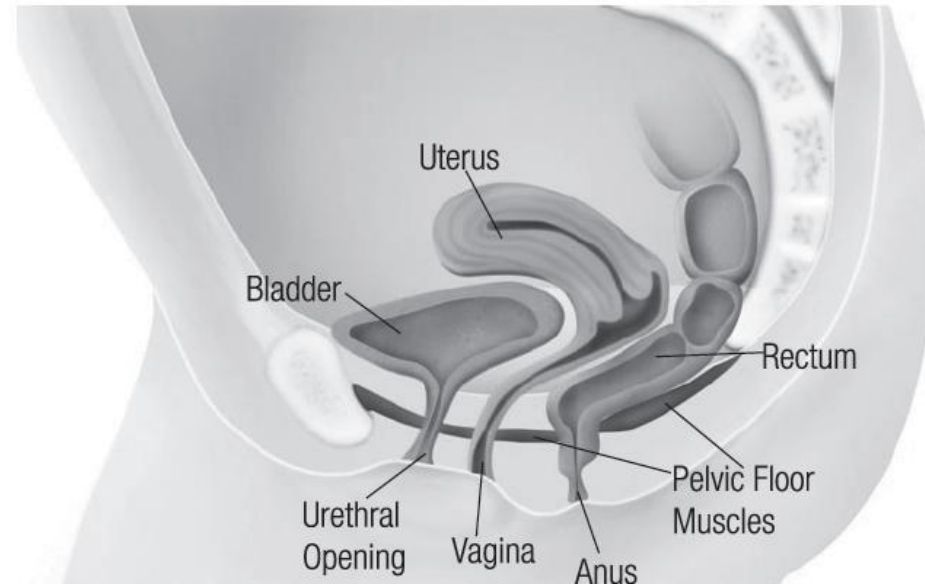
What does it do?

- Helps support the pelvic organs including bladder, bowel & uterus
- Forms part of the “core” of muscles needed for low back and pelvic stability
- Resists downwards pressure inside your abdomen during activities.
 - eg. Cough, sneeze, lift, strong exercise



What does it do?

- Important for bladder and bowel control
- Supportive role during pregnancy
- Helps sexual sensation and orgasm



AGES AND STAGES OF THE PELVIC FLOOR

Ageing and The Pelvic Floor

- Further weakening of the muscles
- Chronic health conditions
 - Diabetes
 - Arthritis
 - Heart disease
 - Respiratory disease



Men and the Pelvic Floor

- Sport
- Work
- Weight gain
- Weakening of muscles
 - In older age
 - Prostate surgery
- Chronic health problems



Menopause and The Pelvic Floor

- Hormones:
Oestrogen
- Weight gain
Around the waist



"Do you know what I fear most about old age?"

"No what?"

"Incontinence!"



Signs of Pelvic Floor Problems

- ✓ Accidentally leaking urine eg. when you laugh, cough, sneeze or exercise
- ✓ Having to hurry to the toilet or not making it there in time
- ✓ Constantly needing to go to the toilet
- ✓ Difficulty emptying your bowel or bladder
- ✓ Accidentally losing control of your bladder or bowel

Signs of Pelvic Floor Problems

- ✓ Accidentally passing wind
- ✓ Pelvic organ prolapse
 - a bulge in the vagina
 - a feeling of heaviness, discomfort, pulling, dragging or dropping
- ✓ Pain in your pelvic area
- ✓ Painful sex
- ✓ Poor sensation or leaking during sex

Conditions related to PF dysfunction

- Urinary incontinence
- Faecal incontinence
- Prolapse

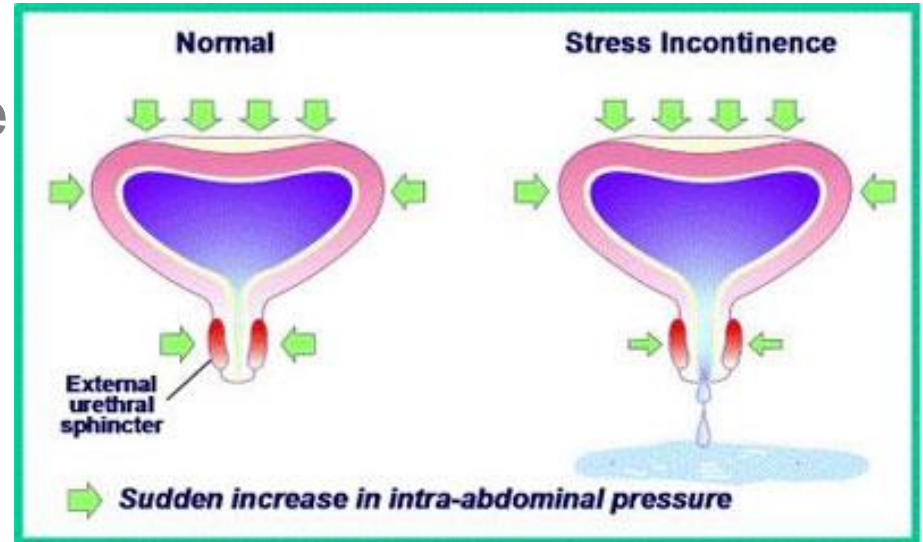
Urinary Incontinence

- Stress incontinence = leakage during tasks with increased force
- Urge incontinence = the inability to hold with the need to void
- Mixed = a combination of both

As we age, it seems to be a combination of factors that add up to incontinence rather than a clear single event

Stress Incontinence

- Inadequate closing pressure
 - Urethral atrophy
 - Weak or absent pelvic floor response



Urge Incontinence

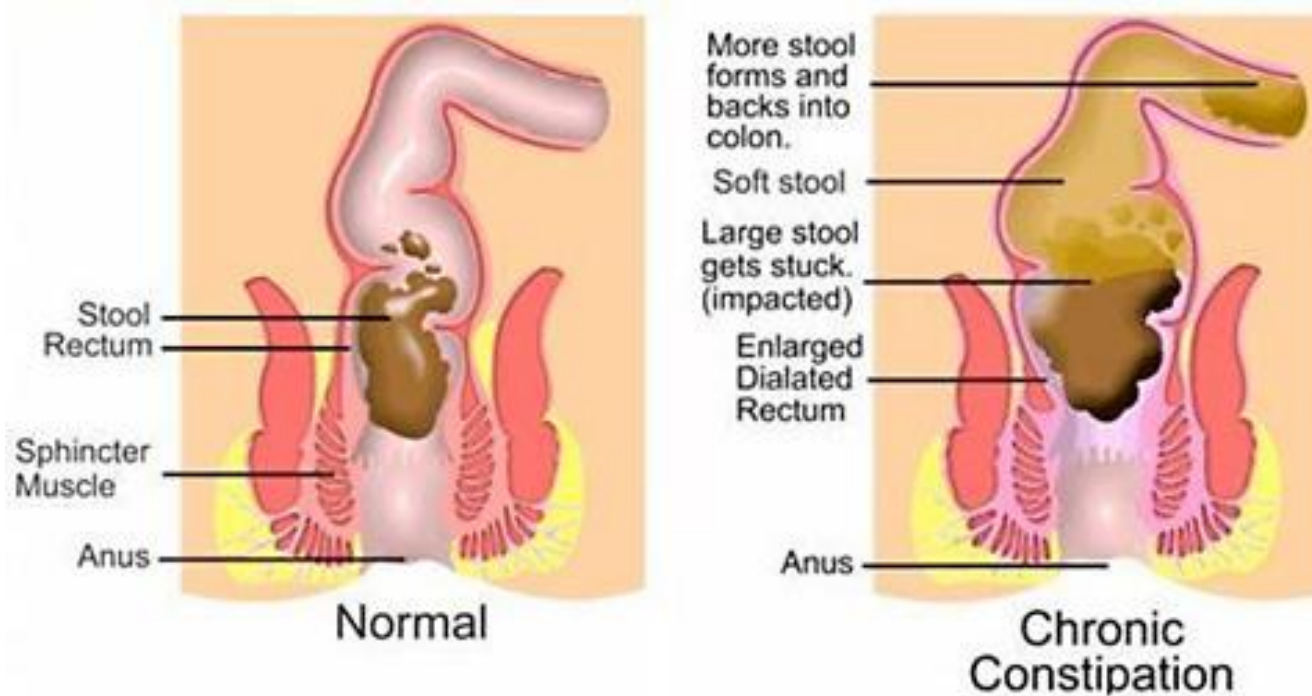
- I need to go to the toilet....NOW!
- I can't hold on
- I know where every toilet is in.....
- I leak before I get to the toilet



Faecal Incontinence

- Can be more complex and worth medical investigation
- The gut system has its own nervous system and is therefore very complex
- It is possible to be constipated and have incontinence at the same time – “sneaky poos”!
- A large amount of people need to learn how to pass without incorrect straining

“Sneaky Pooos” = Overflow Incontinence



Pelvic Organ Prolapse

- Descent of intrapelvic organs such as the uterus, bladder, urethra and rectum due to deficiencies in the pelvic support system
- Often asymptomatic and develops over time
- Early symptoms: heaviness or weight in the vagina or rectum, changes to voiding, back or abdominal pain, obstructive constipation
- Incidence has been reported as high as 39.8%

Risk Factors for Prolapse

- **Constipation**
- Childbearing with increasing risk with multiple births
- **Heavy lifting**
- **Repetitive lifting**
- **Poor pelvic floor control during high impact exercise**
- **Obesity**
- Menopause
- **Smoking**
- Oestrogen Deficiencies
- **Chronic coughing**
- Prior surgery
- Collagen abnormalities and Myopathies

What do people do?

To cope with incontinence, people tend to...

- Avoid aggravating activities
 - decrease exercise
- Go frequently
 - before activity and “just-in-case”
- Wear pads
- Don't drink enough
- Plan activity around toilet stops
- Stay at home
- Live in denial

Making Changes For the Better

To prevent or improve bladder and bowel problems

- Develop healthy habits to stay in control
- Look after you pelvic floor
- Seek help

Healthy Habits to Stay In Control



Healthy Habit 1

Drink well

- To prevent bladder irritation & constipation



Healthy Habit 2

Eat well

- To keep your bowels regular
- To have a healthy body weight



Healthy Habit 3

Exercise Regularly

- To have a healthy body weight
- To prevent constipation



Healthy Habit 4

Practice good toilet habits

- To keep your bladder under your control
- To prevent constipation
- To protect your pelvic floor

Correct toileting position



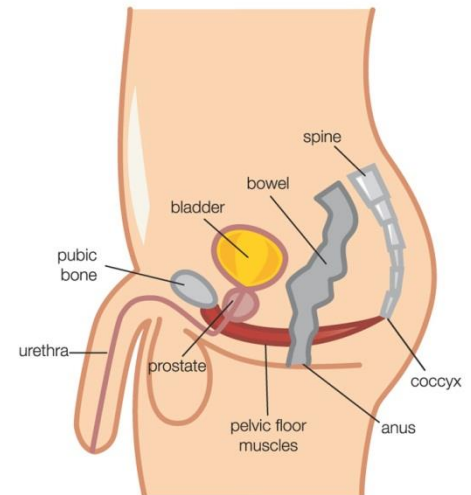
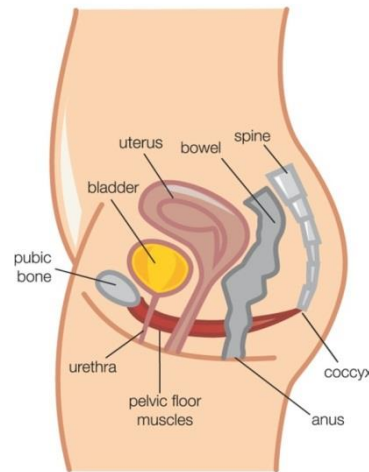
Knees higher than hips. Lean forward and put elbows on your knees. Bulge out your abdomen. Straighten your spine.

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Healthy Habit 5

Look after your pelvic floor

- To keep it strong for good bladder and bowel control



Looking after the pelvic floor

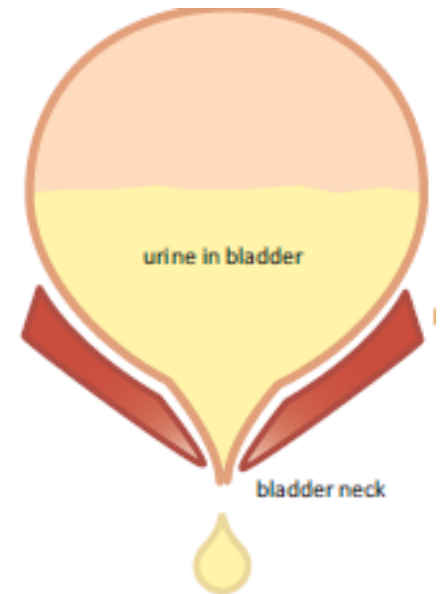
- Protection
 - reduce the risk factors
 - healthy bladder and bowel habits
- Activity
 - exercise the pelvic floor muscles correctly
 - use the pelvic floor during activities
 - make sure your activity is not damaging your pelvic floor
 - rehabilitation where needed

We need our pelvic floor muscles to:

- Support our pelvic organs against the pressure and load generated by activity
- Respond quickly and strongly
- Relax fully

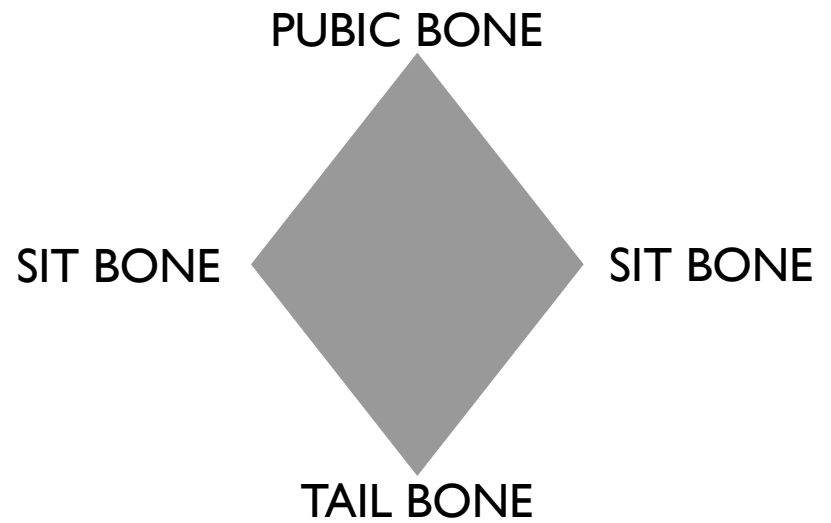
Why do we need to do pelvic floor muscle exercises?

- Build awareness and co-ordination
 - Brain finds your muscle
 - Ability to isolate pelvic floor muscle
- Increase muscle tone and bulk
- Improves the speed of response



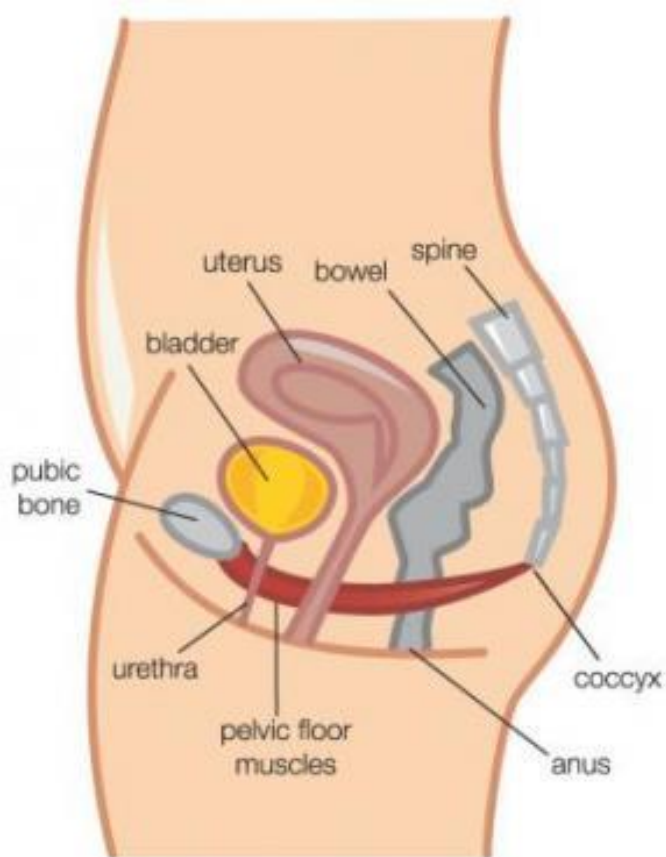
Where is YOUR pelvic floor?

- Imagine a diamond



- Sit up tall
- Lean forward, hands on your knees
- Feel this diamond underneath you

Pelvic floor muscle exercises: Time to try!

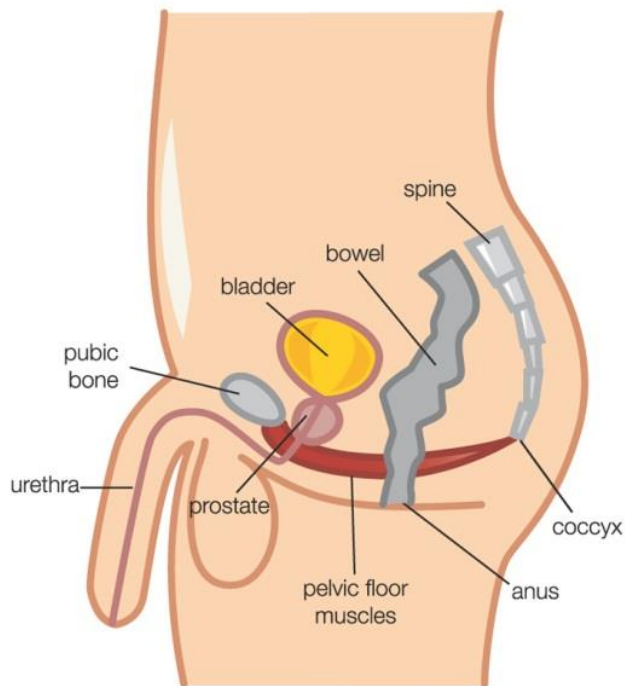


Pelvic floor contraction=

- **Squeeze** around bladder, vagina, and anus
- **Lift** inside, up higher into the pelvis

pelvic floor first

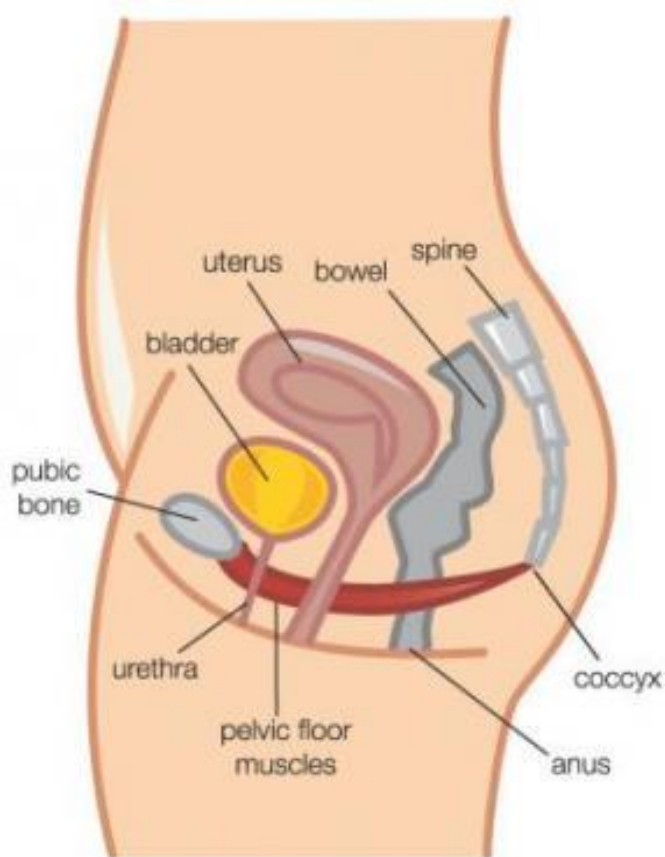
Pelvic floor muscle exercises: Men



Pelvic floor contraction=

- **Squeeze** around anus
- **Lift** testicles, up higher into the pelvis
- **Retract** or shorten penis

Pelvic floor muscle exercises: Time to try!

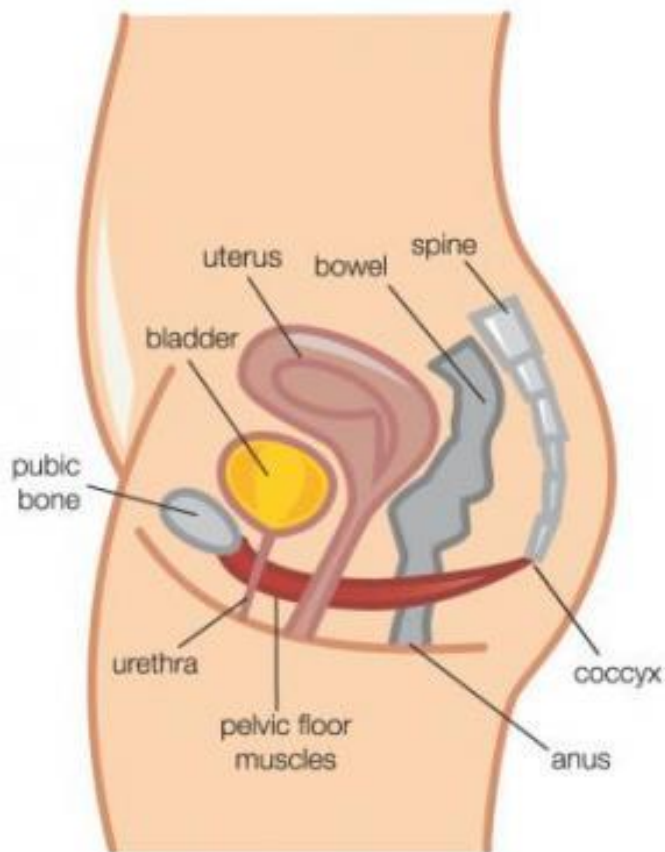


Use your imagination!
Concentrate!

Cues:

- “Squeeze and lift”
- “Tighten and pull up”
- “Hold wind and urine at the same time”

Pelvic floor muscle exercises: Time to try!



Imagery:

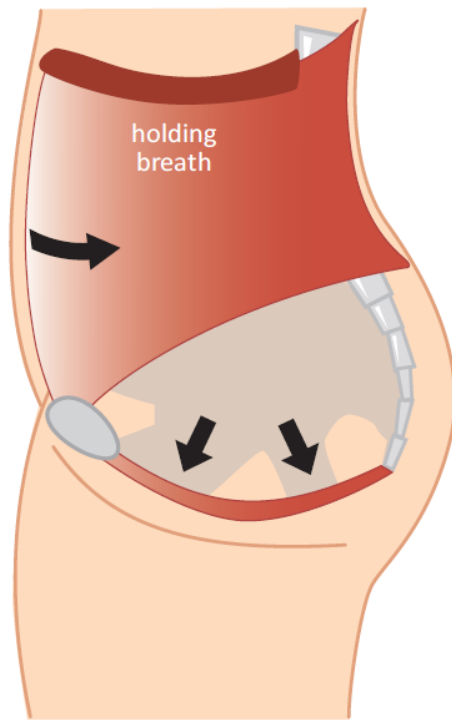
- Elevator
- Picking up a silk scarf
- Zip
- Pea

Pelvic floor muscle exercises

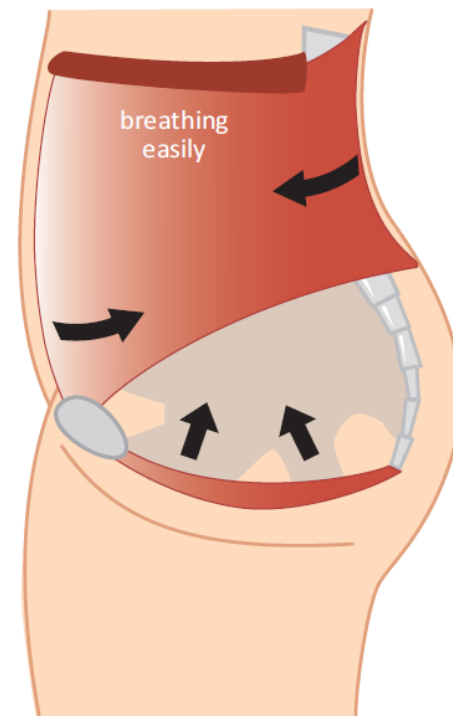
Isolation is the key to success

- Are your buttocks and thighs relaxed?
- Are you drawing in above your belly button?
- Are you holding your breath?
- Are you completely ‘letting go’?

The pelvic floor and the core



Incorrect action
Pulling the belly button in towards the backbone and holding your breath can cause bearing-down on pelvic floor



Correct action
The pelvic floor lifts, the deep abdominals draw in and there is no change in breathing

What is the correct amount?

- How strong?
- How long?
- How many?

AIM = Muscle fatigue!

How long can **you** hold the contraction for?

How many repetitions can **you** do?

Seek further help if you are:

- Not sure if contracting your pelvic floor correctly
- Experiencing bladder or bowel problems
- Feeling a sensation of bulging, heaviness or fullness in the vagina
- Practicing pelvic floor exercises with no noticeable improvement for more than 6 weeks

If you are having trouble:

- National Continence Helpline 1800 33 00 66
www.continence.org.au
- www.pelvicfloorfirst.com.au
- Public sector: Continence Services
(multidisciplinary)
- Private sector
 - Continence and Women's Health Physiotherapists

Other resources

- National Public Toilet Map



- Health Promotion Officer – free community education session

QUESTIONS?