

The What? Why? & How? of Pelvic Floor!

Pelvic floor, kegel muscles, the 'squeeze', 'clutch', 'clench' or 'pull up'... You've probably heard about the Thai girls and their amazing tricks with ping pong balls, even if you haven't actually seen it ... Less known is the rumour that the women of some African tribes control their menfolk with an impressive squeeze of these muscles during an intimate moment... But what exactly are these muscles and why and how should **you** train them during and after pregnancy?

The what?

The pelvic floor is a layer of muscles lying across the bottom of the pelvis. Through them pass the openings from the vagina, bowel and urethra (tube from the bladder). These muscles support the uterus, intestines and bladder and are **perhaps the most important muscles you need to know about and exercise during and after pregnancy!**

The why?

You should train your pelvic floor muscles to:

1. Improve your sex life (we may now be mothers but we are still women and lovers!)
2. Function more efficiently in labour
3. Repair and recondition them after the stretching and weakening that occurs during pregnancy and childbirth
4. Increase blood flow to the area assisting the healing of post delivery stitches
5. Retain good bladder control after childbirth so coughing, sneezing and laughing doesn't lead to 'leaking'
6. Ensure good bowel control after pregnancy

The how?

Exercising your pelvic floor muscles involves tightening the front and back passage. The most common way of locating these muscles is to stop peeing midway through the flow. Initially it is easier to exercise your pelvic floor whilst seated, but once you have got the hang of it you can use a variety of positions.

1. Standing pidgeon toed makes it harder to cheat by squeezing the buttocks
2. Squatting asks the muscles to contract whilst there is a lot more downward pressure on them
3. Of course 'squeezing' whilst you are in a normal seated or standing position means you can do them anytime, anywhere!

You can do short contractions – squeeze-release-squeeze-release... or long contractions – squeeze and hold-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 or a combination of the 2 - contract and hold for 10, then 5 short contractions, then hold again for 10.

Remember quality over quantity - 10 strong contractions are better than 50 twitches!

The hardest thing about pelvic floor exercises is remembering to do them regularly. Find an event that happens daily and build an association between that event and your pelvic floor exercises, that way every time you are in that situation you will remember to do them.

Some opportune pelvic floor muscles moments:

1. In the car at a red traffic light
2. Watching your favourite TV show
3. Sitting in the Doctor/Obstetrician/ultrasound waiting room
4. Waiting for the kettle to boil
5. Standing in a queue

If all else fails stick a note on the fridge asking 'Have you pelvic floored today?!'

And how will know if you pelvic floor is getting stronger? Simply exercise it during sex and ask your partner can you feel that honey? More or less than last week?

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