

How to Kegel

The Kegel is another word for a pelvic floor muscle contraction. Kegels can be extremely helpful in helping to reduce urinary incontinence, prolapse, urinary frequency, and can even help reduce pelvic girdle and back pain; however, it can be very difficult to know if you are performing them correctly.

- **Are Kegels even right for me?**
 - Kegels can be ideal for people who have weak, overstretched pelvic floors, with primary symptoms of stress UI or prolapse.
 - Kegels are NOT right for you if you have symptoms that may indicate you have a tight, hypertonic pelvic floor:
 - Increased urinary urge/frequency
 - Pain with urination
 - Pelvic pain
 - Pain with intercourse
 - Difficulty starting your urine stream/constipation

- **How do I know I am doing a kegel correctly?**
 - First, you need to find your pelvic floor. Use a mirror to provide visual feedback to yourself. Lay in a reclined position without underwear, so that you can visualize your vagina, perineum and anus.
 - Imagine that you are trying to stop your urine stream, and that you are trying to stop having a BM as well. You should see:
 - Anal wink: your anus should pucker up and draw inward
 - Clitoral nod: your clitoris and the upper part of the vagina should dip slightly downward.
 - Perineal pucker: your perineum, the space between your vagina and anus, should draw inward.
 - The feeling of a proper kegel should be a squeeze (squeezing the holes closed) and a lift (like an elevator).
 - Begin with 5 repetitions at a time, making sure you can feel both the contraction AND the relaxation each time.

- **Common mistakes:**
 - Breath-holding: to combat this, take a diaphragmatic breath in, then kegel as you EXHALE. This helps capitalize on the relationship between those muscles. Also, as you begin to hold your contractions for longer, count aloud as you hold to make sure you are breathing.

- Bearing down: this is when you push downward instead of drawing upward. This can often worsen symptoms of incontinence and prolapse, and must be avoided.
- Using other muscles: Other muscles are only too happy to help substitute for a weak pelvic floor. Try to avoid clenching your buttocks, squeezing your inner thighs, or strongly squeezing your belly, and instead focus your efforts on the area between your sitting bones, and between your pubic bone and tailbone.

STOP kegels if any of your symptoms worsen, or if you begin to feel like you have a UTI, and consult with your doctor. Please consider pelvic PT to assist you with beginning your kegel journey with confidence!