



Kegel Exercises or “KEGELS”

Kegel exercises were developed by Dr. Arnold Kegel (Kay-gill) for women with trouble controlling urination due to a weakened pubococcygeus (pew-bo-kak-se-gee-us) muscle, termed P.C. for convenience. This circular muscle stretches from the pubic bone in front and around the pelvic cavity to the tailbone in back. It supports the uterus and bladder. It also encircles all three pelvic openings, the urethra, vagina and rectum, enabling them to open and close.

1. Preparation for childbirth: Because the P.C. muscle encircles the birth canal (vagina) it must stretch immensely to allow the baby passage. By becoming aware of the P.C. muscle and learning to consciously contract and relax it, the woman is better able to deliberately relax it during labor. The exercise also tones and conditions the muscle, making it more elastic. Kegels throughout pregnancy help prepare for easier stretching of the birth canal, which helps prevent tears and episiotomies.
2. Re-strengthen and tone after birth: The stress on the P.C. muscle caused by childbirth may weaken it, lending to prolapse (falling) of the uterus and/or bladder into the vagina. A weakened P.C. muscle can also result in involuntary or frequent urination. Doing Kegels restores muscle tone and therefore supports pelvic organs and control of urination. In the event of an episiotomy or tear, Kegels should be performed. Kegels will promote healing by increasing circulation to the area.
3. Increased sexual pleasure: Doing Kegels will increase the circulation and sensitivity in the genitals and will enhance muscle tone, therefore tightness in the vagina. It is especially pleasurable for both the woman and man if she does Kegels during intercourse. Women unable to achieve orgasm with penetration may find success by rhythmically contracting and releasing the vaginal muscles during intercourse.

How to do Kegels:

First locate the P.C. muscle. The best way is sitting on the toilet to urinate. Spread your legs wide apart and stop and start the flow of urine without moving your legs. The muscle used to stop and start urine is the pubococcygeus. If you have difficulty finding it the first time, try again the next time you urinate. Don't give up – it is there.

Once you find the P.C. there are several ways to do the exercise:

1. Tighten or contract the muscle, hold for 3 seconds then relax and repeat.
2. Contract and relax as rapidly as possible, sometimes called “flicking”.
3. Starting at the pelvic floor gradually tighten upward while inhaling. Imagine the P.C. as an elevator rising one level at a time as you contract upward. When it is as tight as you can make it then slowly exhale letting the elevator down relaxing one level at a time until the P.C. is completely loose again.

It is recommended that you do 10 Kegels 8 times per day. That's **80 each day!** However, the muscle is often lax and weak from being idle and you may find it difficult to do the exercises rhythmically or keep them up for the recommended time. Begin slowly and patiently and don't dismay. Keep at it and soon you will notice improvement. Doing any Kegels at all is far more beneficial than doing none.