

Pelvic floor Strengthening Program

Start 4 to 6 weeks after delivery

How to make sure you are **PROPERLY** contracting your pelvic floor (PF)?

Sit in a chair with your back straight and both feet flat on the floor. Now imagine you are holding in your gas and pee. You should feel your PF lift from the chair. As you relax, you should feel the muscles of the PF gently fall back onto the chair.

You could also lay down and insert a finger into the vagina. You should feel the PF muscles squeeze your finger and create a sort of vacuum up and inwards.

****** If you do not think you have a proper contraction, it is important to consult a physiotherapist with a PF expertise.

Parameters and positions

Empty bladder before doing exercises.

Beginner: Repeat 1-2 times per day and 5 times a week

- Start by laying on your back with your knees bent
- Contract the PF for **5 seconds** then relax completely for **10-15 seconds**
- Do **3 sets of 5** maximal contractions

Advanced : Repeat 1-2 times per day and 5 times a week

- Perform the same exercises sitting then standing
- Increase the parameters gradually until you can achieve: **3 sets of 10 times for 10 seconds with a 20 seconds rest** between each repetition



**Make sure you are using
the right muscles!**

**As you contract the PF,
watch out for the following:**

- DO NOT contract the buttocks, thighs or abdominals
- DO maintain a consistent breathing pattern
- Count out loud to help with the breathing

When should you consult a pelvic floor physiotherapist?

In order to prevent and solve some problems, it is important to consult a physiotherapist with a pelvic floor expertise if you have:

- Urinary leaks/urgent need to use the washroom
- Difficulties holding in gas
- Uncontrolled leaks of stool
- A heaviness/weight in the vagina
- Pain during intercourse
- Pain in the vagina, vulva, anus, low back or pelvis
- Chronic constipation
- An abdominal diastasis larger than 3 fingers (ask your doctor to evaluate) or an abdominal weakness
- If you are not 100% sure that you are contracting your PF properly
- If you are still having symptoms after PF reeducation talk to your doctor for other treatment options

CONSULT

<https://oppq.qc.ca/en/find-a-professional/>



Advice for a healthy pelvic floor



Obstetrics /
Physical Therapy Department

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de l'Ouest-de-
l'Île-de-Montréal

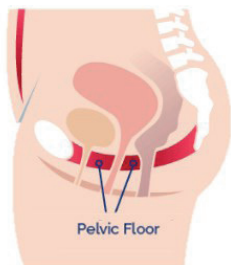
Québec



What is the pelvic floor?

The perineum or pelvic floor (PF) is the area around the vagina and the anus. It is made out of several muscles. It has important roles in:

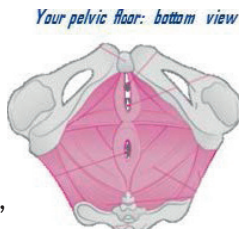
- Controlling urine, stool and gas
- Supporting organs (uterus, bladder, rectum)
- Sexual function
- Stabilizing the pelvis and low back



Pelvic floor reeducation

PF physiotherapy is a specialized approach that treats problems related to the:

- Bladder: leaks, urgencies, bladder descent
- Rectum and anus: constipation, diarrhea, pain
- Vulva and vagina: pain during intercourse, vestibulodynia, vaginismus



Tips following childbirth to reduce swelling

- Apply a cold compress on the exterior of the PF (e.g. crushed ice in a infant diaper) and insert it in your undergarments. (15-20 minutes)
- Add Witch Hazel on a sanitary pad and apply to perineum
- Lie down on your back and put pillows under your buttocks for 15-20 minutes, 2-3 times a day

Why is it important to take care of your PF following childbirth?

To prevent issues with:

- the descent of organs (prolapse)
- leakage of urine, gas and stool
- pelvic and low back pains

Prevention methods

- Strengthening the PF muscles
- Solving constipation problems
- Strengthening the abdominals: exercises in 4 points-kneeling, planking on the knees, yoga, Pilates, elliptical, etc. NO 'CRUNCH' (sit-ups)
- Avoid running or other high impact activities for the first 4-5 months. Since the PF is still vulnerable due to the hormonal effect and breastfeeding, these exercises might push on the PF and delay the healing process

Think to contract the PF before, during and after:

- Lifting heavy weights (baby, infant car seat, ...)
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Blowing your nose

How can you take care of it?

- 1 Follow a strengthening program for the PF muscles** (see the 'Strengthening program' section)
- 2 Take part in adapted physical activities after childbirth**
 - Approximately 6 weeks after delivery, you may start low impact activities. **E.g.** elliptical, stationary bike, mommy-baby group exercises, yoga, Pilates, swimming, light weights, etc.
 - High impact activities may begin 4-5 months after delivery AND after having done a PF strengthening program. **E.g.** running, crossfit, power lifting, soccer, volleyball, trampolining, etc.
- 3 Avoid constipation**
 - Eat a high fiber diet (fruits, vegetables, whole wheat)
 - Stay hydrated! (1.5- 2L/day) Your urine should be a pale yellow and odorless.
 - Do physical activity for at least 30 min./day

To improve stool evacuation, take a deep breath in and squeeze your lips together. Then exhale slowly while gently pulling your belly button towards your spine.

- ⚠ Avoid holding your breath and pushing out the stool.
- ⚠ Go to the washroom as soon as you need to go
- ⚠ Sit in a proper position to facilitate the stool's passing.

