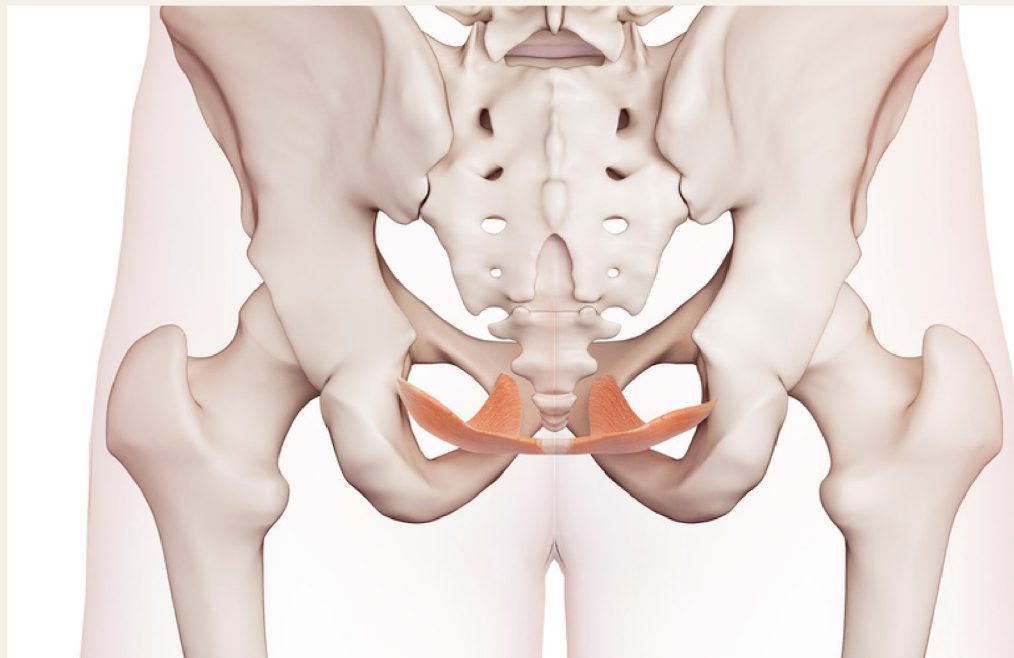


Pelvic Floor Revival



- What is the Pelvic Floor
- Muscles of the Pelvic Floor
- Significance of breathing



Pelvic floor exercises, or Kegel exercises, are **beneficial for both men and women, regardless of whether they've had a baby**. Strengthening the pelvic floor helps prevent incontinence, enhances sexual function, supports pelvic organs, improves posture, prevents lower back pain, and promotes better bowel function. Incorporating these exercises into a regular routine promotes overall pelvic health and well-being.

More on floor

The pelvic floor forms a sling at the base of the abdominal cavity. It runs front to back from the pubic bone to the tailbone and sacrum, side to side from sit bone to sit bone with two openings for the vagina and anus. The sit bones, ischial tuberosities, are located at the base of the pelvis slightly behind the pubic bone and left and right of the tailbone.



·What it does:

The pelvic floor has four main functions

- Supports internal organs: keeping the bladder, intestines, stomach, and other abdominal contents from falling out of the body. Think of the pelvic floor as the basement hammock of the body.
- Provides fecal, gas, and urinary continence: the front to back part of the pelvic floor closes off both anal and urethral sphincters.
- Provides stronger sexual sensation: parts of these muscles contain erectile tissue that can produce greater sensations during intercourse.
- Expulsion of baby: when these muscles are healthy and not too tight from overwork (i.e., using Kegels only to address the front to back part of the pelvic floor) they can help push the baby out faster.

Why it is important: Up to 25% of women end up with some kind of pelvic floor dysfunction after birth. Pregnancy causes excessive strain and stretch of the pelvic floor muscles due to the added weight in the abdominal cavity, but vaginal deliveries (especially prolonged pushing stages) can make the trauma to this area even more severe. Like our approach to the abdominals, it is important to keep this area toned but also flexible and resilient.

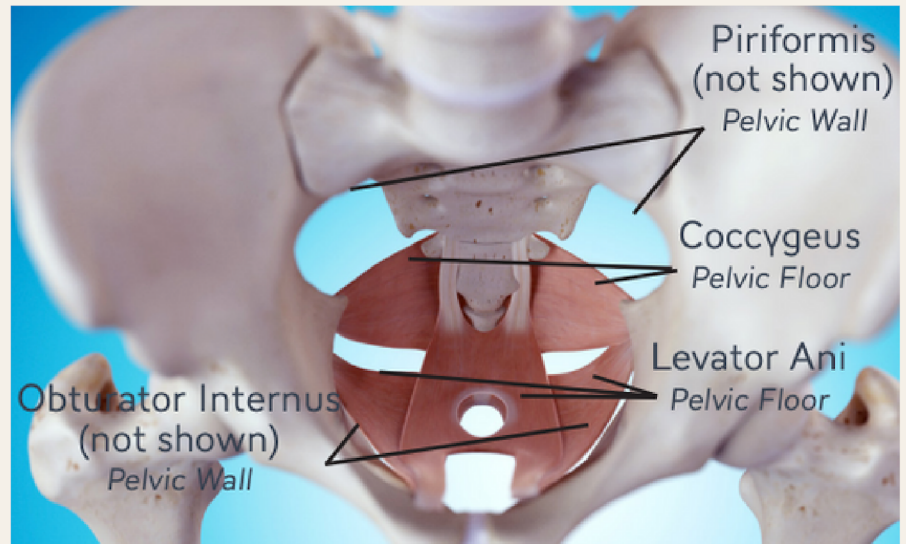
Muscles of the Pelvic Floor

There are two layers of tissue, superficial to the deeper pelvic floor muscles called the superficial perineal layer and the deep urogenital diaphragm layer. What we are concerned with is often also referred to as the pelvic diaphragm and includes:

- **Muscles:** levator ani, piriformis, obturator internus muscles

- **Action:**

- » Levator ani: Support internal organs, aids in continence
- » Coccygeus: Supports internal organs
- » Obturator Internus: Abduct and externally rotate the leg at the hip joint
- » Piriformis: Abduct and externally rotate the legs at the hip joint



How do I know if I am engaging my Pelvic Floor Muscles?

Muscle Finding & Activation

Pelvic Rocking

This exercise aims to identify the location of the pelvic floor without actively engaging the muscles. Front to back: Sit centered on a yoga block with knees bent on either side. Place your right fingers low on your pubic bone and left fingers on your tailbone, gently pressing into the skin. Rock forward and backward on the block to feel the front-to-back sling of the pelvic floor. Side to side: Find your sitting bones on either side of the block, then rock side to side to feel the side-to-side sling of the pelvic floor.

Pelvic Breathing Start in a supine or seated position, with your upper body relaxed, head stacked over shoulders, and hips in neutral spine. Inhale, expanding the rib cage in all directions, directing the breath down between your sitting bones, and relaxing your pelvic floor. As you exhale, feel the sitting bones draw closer together, the pelvic floor gently lift, and the deep abdominals engage. Inhale to relax fully, and exhale to repeat the gentle lift. The effort to engage the pelvic floor on exhalation should be minimal. Avoid squeezing your glutes or rectum, and instead follow the natural lift and contraction of the pelvic floor as you deepen your exhale. Allow the exhale to lead, and follow the gentle pelvic floor engagement.



The significance of breathing linking to pelvic floor strength

1. Inhalation naturally promotes spinal extension.
2. Exhalation naturally facilitates spinal flexion.
3. Core strength is significantly impacted by the diaphragm's health as **80% of our breathing muscles are core-stabilizing muscles.**
4. The interconnection between the diaphragm and pelvic floor influences each other's function.
 - **A strong and flexible pelvic floor supports a robust lower core.** This results from the synergy between the pelvic floor, the transverse abdominis, external rotators of the hip, and the overall health of the pelvis and lower back.
 - Tightness in external rotators, including pelvic floor muscles like the piriformis and obturator internus, limits healthy function in the small-moving joints of the pelvis (sacroiliac and pubic symphysis), contributing to a restricted and weakened pelvic floor. This, in turn, affects the functionality and support of the pelvis and hip sockets, **which impacts the movement and stability of the lower back.**
5. During exhalation, the diaphragm gently elongates the psoas muscle. If breathing is shallow, this elongation is hindered, keeping the psoas short and tight, especially if it is already affected by prolonged sitting or poor posture.
 - Conversely, a tight psoas restricts the retraction of the diaphragm during exhalation.
 - The diaphragm and Quadratus Lumborum (QL) also share a similar relationship, aiding in tilting the pelvis forward during breathing, stabilizing, and extending the lower back.



Exercise

Contraction phase/exhale:

- Draw your tailbone toward your pubic bone (though need to be careful not to go into a posterior pelvic tilt)
- Pull your two sitting bones together
- Feel a light lift internally like you are lifting a small ball from your lower belly towards your rib cage
- If baby was/is still inside, try to lift baby's head up towards your rib cage (baby is head down)

Release phase/inhale:

- Feel baby's head lower towards your belly button
- Imagine the space between the sit bones widening
- Feel the pelvic floor lengthen and lower and relax

