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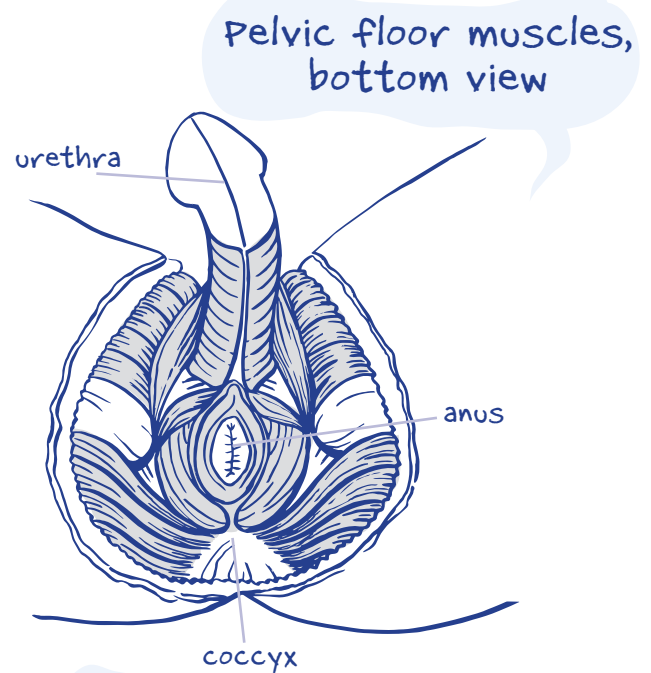
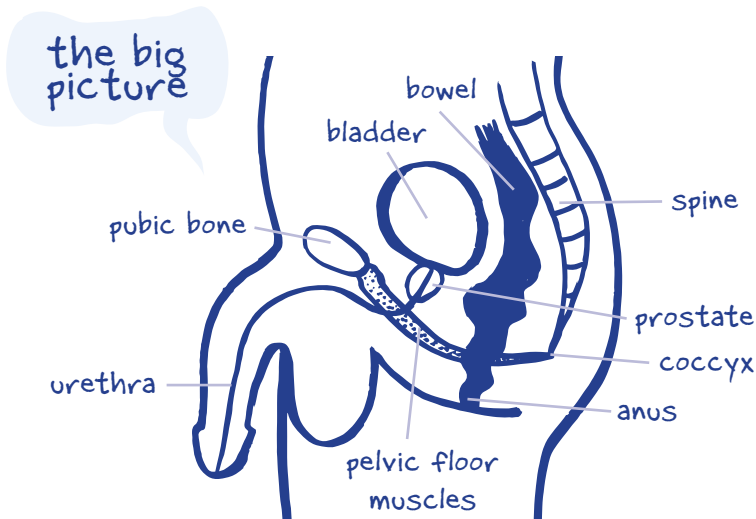


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Introduction

Loss of bladder control and sexual function are some of the most difficult aspects of prostatectomy recovery. Practicing Kegel exercises is one of the most effective and proactive ways to restore bladder and sexual function. This is often the first time in a man's life that he realizes that the word "Kegel" isn't just for women. Men have "Kegel" muscles too!

what is a kegel muscle? This important group of muscles is actually the pelvic floor: the literal floor of the pelvis. These muscles run from the back of your pelvis to the front and attach to the sides. Visualizing this will help you to find these hidden muscles as we dive into learning how to strengthen the pelvic floor.

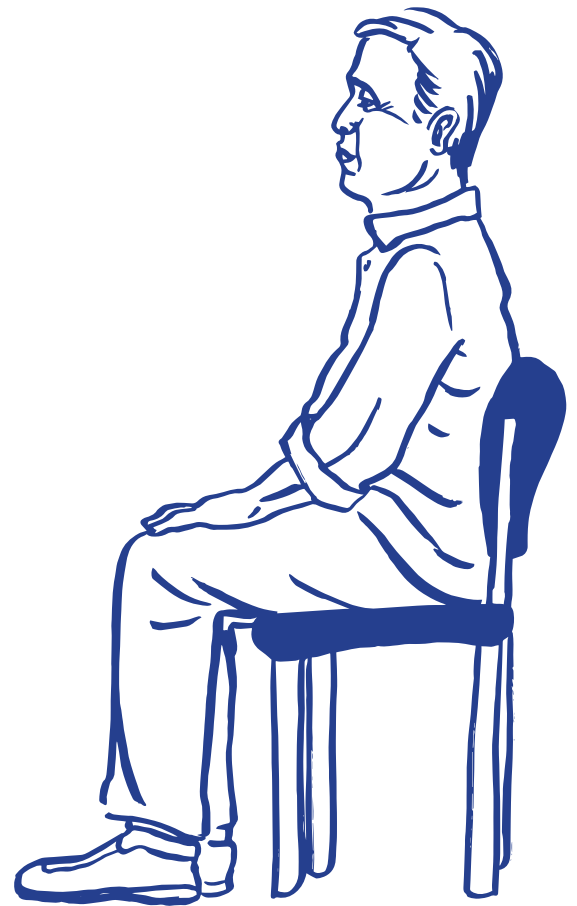


Let's get started!



How to do a Kegel:

1. **Sit** in a comfy but upright chair with feet flat in front of you.
2. **Relax** your body. Sit up straight so your “sit” bones are supporting you. Think about the part of your pelvis that’s touching the chair. This is the pelvic floor.
3. **Pull** those pelvic floor muscles up and in. Imagine you’re trying to pull your testicles and penis into your body, or trying to stop urination. Another trick is “trying to hold back ejaculation.”
4. **Feel** the pelvic floor pulling in and a gentle tightening of the lower abdomen.
That's a Kegel exercise.



Hint:

Be careful not to tighten your glutes or inner thighs. A good pointer is that anyone watching you shouldn't really see any movement.



Basic Kegel exercise

start Hold for a count of 2, then release for a count of 4.

*How many can you do and still feel the upward pull and the downward release?
10, 15, 20?*

Begin there and practice twice a day.

Tougher If you can do the shorter contractions easily, let's start lengthening the time you hold the contraction.

Can you hold for 5 seconds?

Toughest If you can hold longer without straining or holding your breath, then you're ready to progress to a 5 second hold and 10 second release.

Work up to comfortably performing twenty to 25 repetitions 2 times a day.

Hint:

Try standing and performing your Kegels. For some men, this may feel easier. You can practice these while standing in the shower and look to see if your testicles and penis pull upward a bit.



Adding movement

1. While seated, **scoot** forward in your chair so your sit bones are at the edge.
2. **contract** your pelvic floor, keep squeezing as you **stand up**.
3. Once you're in a standing position, **release** the muscles.
4. **Practice** this periodically throughout the day as you rise from a sitting position.

Hint:

This exercise can be helpful to strengthen hip and other pelvic muscles too.



Kegel variations

Ball squeeze exercises

Squeeze a squishy ball between your knees for 3 seconds. Feel your inner thighs tighten. Try to squeeze all the way into your pelvic floor.

Band exercises

Use a rubber exercise band around your knees. Keep your back flat and pull outward on the band.

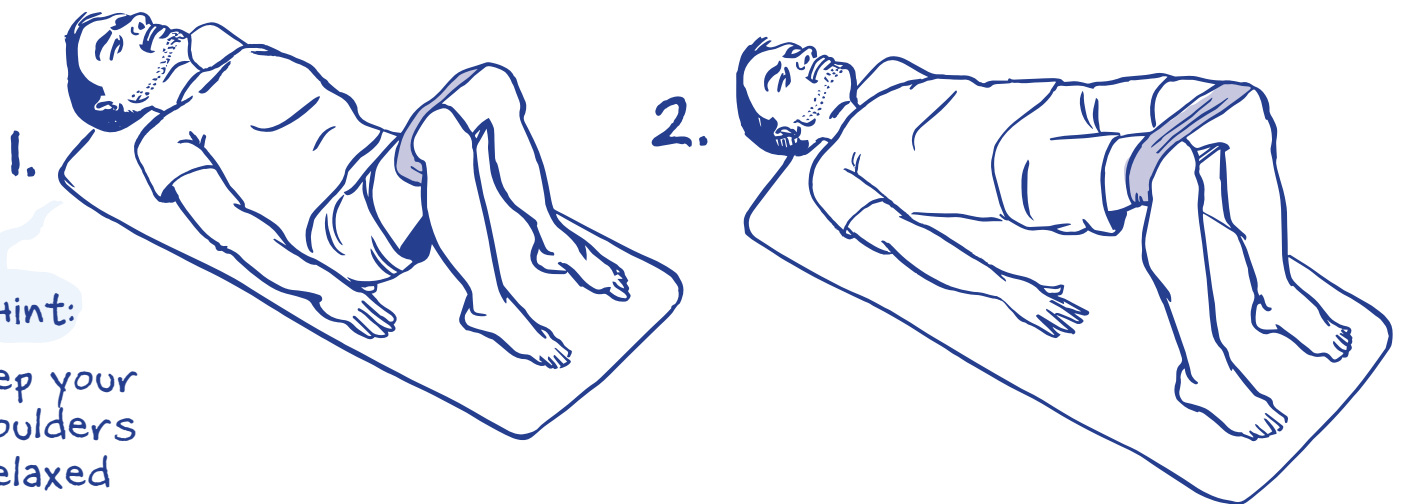
Bridge

Add a bridge lift to your band exercises by pulling the knees out while you are in bridge.

Next, try squeezing the ball while you're in bridge. Do a 2 second pull-out or squeeze-in with each bridge lift.

Do 10 to 25 repetitions for each of these floor exercises.

"Bridge" Exercise: While lying down with knees bent and feet on floor, lift your hips up off the ground until your body is straight, squeezing your buttocks muscles.



Safe Kegeling

Things to watch out for:

Don't overdo and make yourself sore.

If you do, take a few days off and start out more slowly.

Get clearance from your surgeon.

You may be able to start before surgery and continue after as long as you're healed, but your doctor will know you best!

Don't grip your muscles all day!

It is just as important to relax your pelvic floor muscles as it is to contract them.

You could get sore and actually have more problems with leakage due to fatigue.

Hint:

Remember to
give your muscles
breaks throughout
the day!



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Everything Kegel: Easy Ways to Practice was written by Erin Glace, MSPT, PRPC, BCB-PMD (May 2019). Erin is a Physical Therapist at Urology of Virginia. She is a graduate of Old Dominion University with an advanced master's degree in Physical Therapy. Her sole focus of treatment is pelvic floor dysfunction and she has worked with the doctors at Urology of Virginia since 2000. In 2014, she received her Pelvic Rehabilitation Practitioner Certification (PRPC). Erin has a special interest and expertise in treating pelvic pain and voiding dysfunction patients. In 2015, Erin earned a certification in biofeedback treatment and assessment for pelvic floor dysfunction. She lectures locally and internationally on physical therapy for pelvic floor health.

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