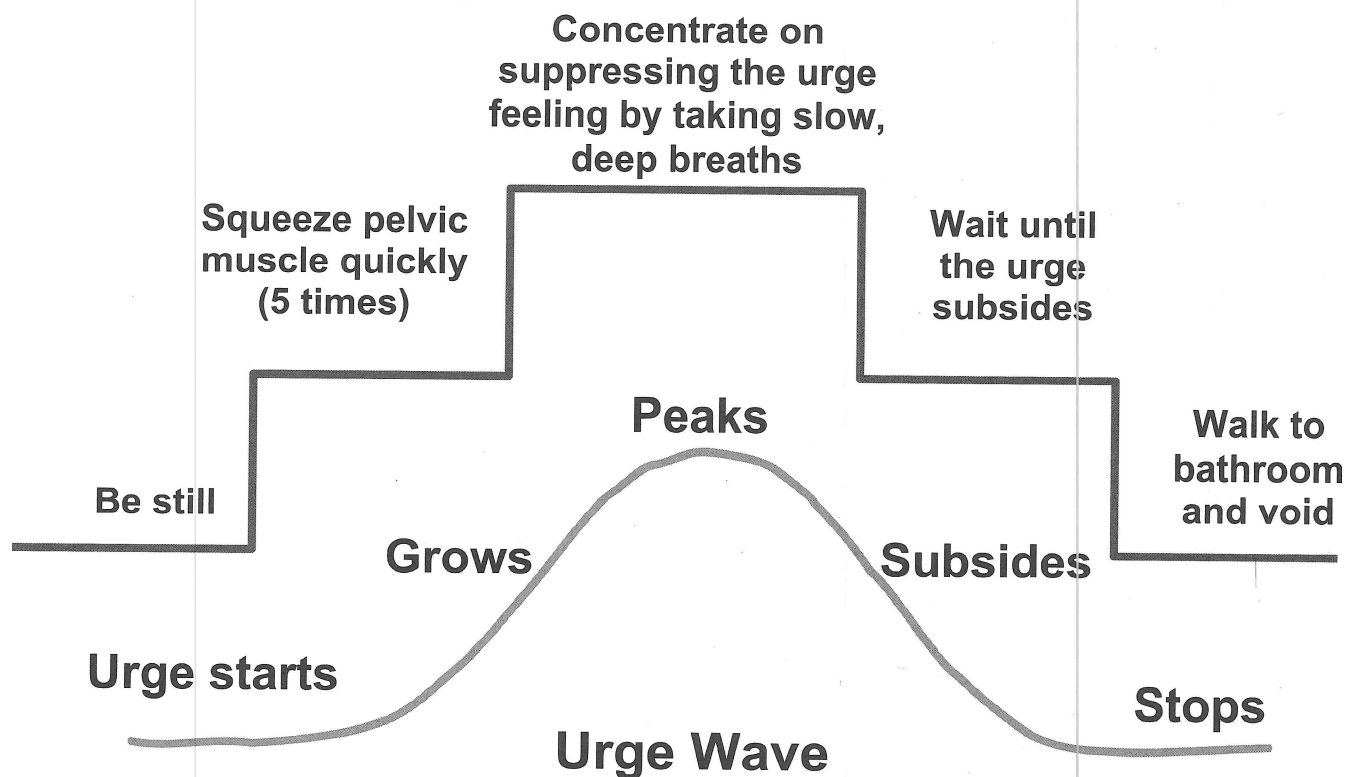


# GAINING CONTROL OF URGENCY AND FREQUENCY

**Urinary urgency** is the sudden, strong feeling of needing to void or empty the bladder immediately that may result in urine leakage on the way to the bathroom. Urgency tends to occur in waves. It begins, grows in intensity until it peaks, and then subsides and stops until the next wave begins (see figure below). **Frequency** often accompanies urgency. It refers to voiding often, typically more than 8 times or more in a 24-hour period.

When you feel urgency, it is important to not rush to the bathroom. Rushing causes movement that can jiggle your bladder, which then increases the feeling of urgency and the risk of urine leakage. Wait until the urgency subsides, then walk slowly to the bathroom.



You can take control over your urgency and frequency by using some simple strategies. If you can distract yourself long enough, often the feeling of urgency will pass. It may take some practice with these strategies but over time you will see that you are gaining control and experiencing less episodes of urgency. You may also find that that you are now able to delay voiding for longer time periods and can achieve a goal of voiding every 2-3 hours.

When you feel urgency, try these strategies:

- Use mind games to distract your attention. Count backwards from 100 by 7's or work on a crossword puzzle.
- Concentrate on a task that requires a great deal of concentration. For example, balancing your checkbook, writing a letter, doing handwork, planning the weekly food menus, or some other activity that requires a great deal of attention. Note: TV watching and talking on the telephone are not distracting enough.
- Try to distract yourself by concentrating on another body sensation such as deep breathing. Sit down and take five slow deep breaths. Try to visualize the air moving in and out of your lungs rather than focusing on your bladder sensation.
- Use self-talk when urgency occurs such as "I can wait," "I can conquer this" "My bladder is not full yet" "I can take control" or "I don't really have to go." Create a statement that fits your situation and personality the best. Keep saying this statement over and over until the feeling of urgency passes.
- Perform five quick, strong pelvic floor muscle contractions. Often, this will relax the bladder so that the feeling of urgency subsides. Alternatively, you could try holding one strong pelvic floor muscle contraction or sitting down and pressing your thighs tightly together. Experiment which one works best for you.

Sometimes you will need to perform several of these strategies to help the feeling of urgency subside. If at first you do not succeed, do not be discouraged. Remember, it takes practice to gain control over urgency.

Good luck!

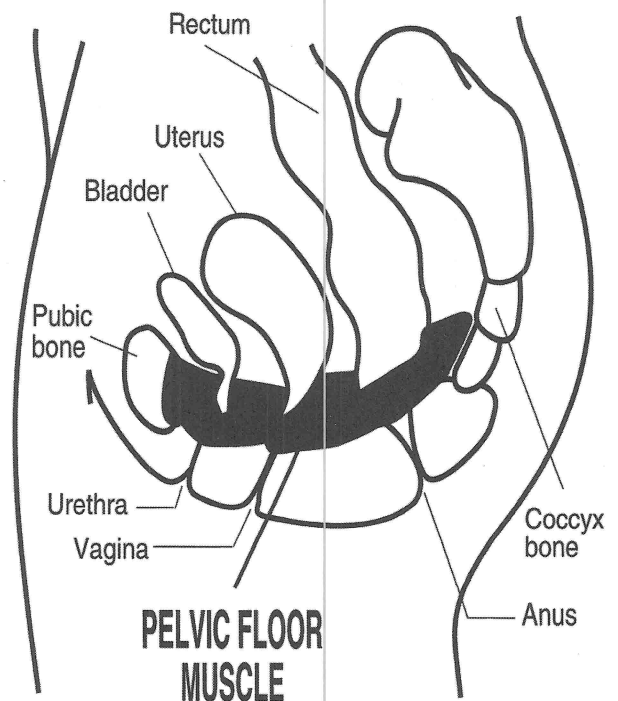
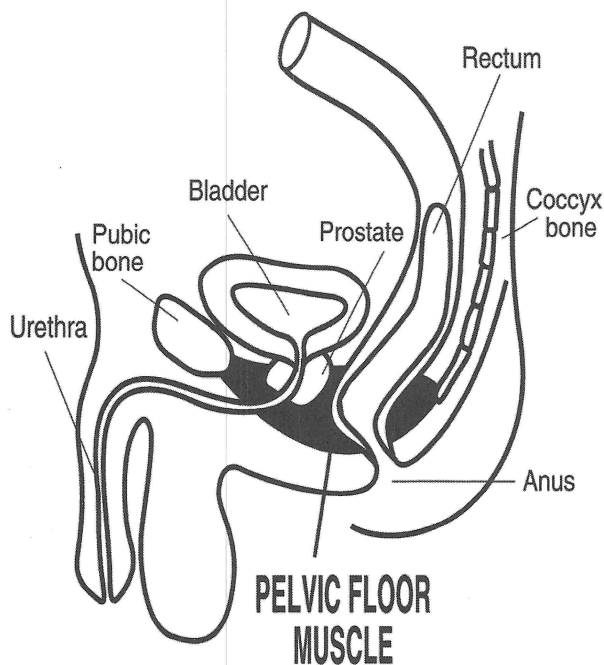
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References:

Newman DK, Wein AJ. *Overcoming Overactive Bladder: Your Complete Self-Care Guide*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications; 2004:83.  
Wyman JF, Fantl JA. Bladder Training in Ambulatory Care Management of Urinary Incontinence. *Urological Nursing*. 1991;11(3):11-17.

## How to Do Pelvic Muscle Exercises

1. **WHAT IS THE PELVIC MUSCLE?** - Your pelvic muscle provides support to your bladder, and rectum and, in women, the vagina and the uterus. If it weakens, it cannot support these organs and their position can change. This change in position can cause problems with normal function. Keeping the muscle strong can help prevent unwanted urine leakage.
2. **FINDING THE PELVIC MUSCLE** - Without tensing the muscles of your leg, buttocks or abdomen, imagine that you are trying to control the passing of gas or pinching off a stool. Or imagine you are in an elevator full of people and you feel the urge to pass gas. What do you do? You tighten or pull in the ring of muscle around your rectum - your pelvic muscle. You should feel a lifting sensation in the area around the vagina or a pulling in of your rectum.



3. **EXERCISE REGIMEN**- One exercise (**Kegels**) consists of both “tightening and relaxing” the muscle. It is equally important to control when your muscle tightens and relaxes. Be sure to relax completely between each muscle tightening.
4. **TYPES OF EXERCISES** There are 2 type of muscle contractions you will need to practice – **Short ( 2 second) or Quick** contractions and **Slow (3 or 5 or 10 second) or long** contractions. To do the short or quick muscle contractions, contract or tighten your pelvic muscle quickly and hard, and immediately relax it. For the slow or long (sustained) contractions, contract or tighten your pelvic muscle and hold for a count of (3 or 5 or 10 as prescribed) seconds, then relax the muscle completely for the same amount of time.
5. **WHERE TO PRACTICE**- These exercises can be practiced anywhere and anytime. You can do the exercises in these positions:

## How to Do Pelvic Muscle Exercises

- **Lying Down** - Lie on your back, flat or with your head on a pillow, knees bent and feet slightly apart. It is helpful to support your knees with a pillow.
  - **Sitting** - Sit upright in a firm seat and straight-back chair, knees slightly apart, feet flat on the floor or legs stretched out in front and crossed at the ankles.
  - **Standing** - Stand by a chair, knees slightly bent with feet shoulder width apart and toes slightly pointed outward. You can also lean on the kitchen counter with your hips flexed.
- 6. TIMES TO USE THE MUSCLE** - If you experience urine loss in one specific position only, like when you stand, then follow these steps:
- Increase the number of exercises for that position only, or
  - Add additional exercises per day with focus on doing all the exercises in that position only.
- 7. COMMON MISTAKES** -
- Concentrate and tighten only the pelvic floor muscle. **DO NOT** tighten thighs, buttocks or stomach. If you feel your stomach move, then you are also using these muscles.
  - **DO NOT** hold your breath. Breathe normally and/or count out loud.
- 8. CAN THEY BE HARMFUL?** No, these exercises cannot harm you in any way. You should find them easy and relaxing. If you get back or stomach pain after you exercise, you are probably trying too hard and using your stomach muscles. If you experience headaches, then you are also tensing your chest muscles and probably holding your breath.
- 9. WHEN WILL I SEE A CHANGE?** After 4 to 6 weeks of daily exercise, you will begin to notice less urine leakage. Make the exercises part of your daily lifestyle. Tighten the muscle when you walk, as you stand up, and on the way to the bathroom.

Reference:

Newman DK, Wein AJ. *Overcoming Overactive Bladder: Your Complete Self-Care Guide*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications; 2004.

# EXERCISE PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the following exercises:

1. **SHORT QUICK EXERCISE**

CONTRACT THE MUSCLE FOR 2 – 3  
SECONDS AND IMMEDIATELY RELAX.

2. **LONG SUSTAINED EXERCISE:**

CONTRACT THE MUSCLE, AND HOLD  
THE CONTRACTION A COUNT OF \_\_\_\_\_.

THEN IMMEDIATELY RELAX FOR A  
COUNT OF \_\_\_\_\_.

3. BE SURE TO REST YOUR MUSCLE  
AFTER EACH MUSCLE CONTRACTION  
FOR THE SAME LENGTH OF THE  
CONTRACTION OR LONGER.

4. WHEN YOU HAVE COMPLETED BOTH  
TYPES OF EXERCISES IN ALL 3  
POSITIONS, YOU WILL HAVE  
COMPLETED ONE SESSION.

5. BE SURE TO MAINTAIN YOUR VOIDING  
INTERVAL SCHEDULE.

EXERCISE SESSION		
<b>Lying Down</b>		
Do _____ exercises:	_____ seconds	<b>SHORT/QUICK</b>
Do _____ exercises:	_____ seconds	<b>LONG</b>
<b>Sitting</b>		
Do _____ exercises:	_____ seconds	<b>SHORT/QUICK</b>
Do _____ exercises:	_____ seconds	<b>LONG</b>
<b>Standing</b>		
Do _____ exercises:	_____ seconds	<b>SHORT/QUICK</b>
Do _____ exercises:	_____ seconds	<b>LONG</b>

Do \_\_\_\_\_ exercise sessions per day

Which total = \_\_\_\_\_ exercises everyday.

Go to the bathroom every \_\_\_\_\_ hours during the day.

Go to the bathroom every \_\_\_\_\_ minutes during the day.

**SPECIAL TIPS:**

- ALWAYS EMPTY YOUR BLADDER PRIOR TO BEGINNING YOUR EXERCISE SESSION.
- COUNT OUT LOUD WITH SUSTAINED OR LONG EXERCISES; REMEMBER TO KEEP BREATHING!
- KEEP YOUR STOMACH, LEG AND BUTTOCK MUSCLES RELAXED. REST YOUR HAND ON YOUR STOMACH, IT SHOULD NOT MOVE OR TENSE.
- IF IT HELPS, TAKE A DEEP BREATH BETWEEN EACH EXERCISE TO HELP YOU KEEP OTHER MUSCLES RELAXED.

Reference: Newman DK, Wein AJ. *Overcoming Overactive Bladder: Your Complete Self-Care Guide*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications; 2004.

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_