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“Kegel” Pelvic Muscle Exercises

GOAL: The goal of pelvic muscle exercises is to increase the strength of the muscle group known as the pubococcygeus sling muscles. These muscles provide support to your bladder and urethra and are located underneath the rectum and vagina. As with any exercises, you will want to gradually increase the number of contractions you perform and increase the length of time you hold each individual contraction. This can help in the recovery of the vagina and pelvic muscles after delivery of a baby as well as sometimes cure stress urinary incontinence. Stronger, thicker pelvic floor muscles restore urethral tone and reduce or prevent urine leakage. When you are about to cough or sneeze you can tighten your muscles and prevent leakage. As these exercises are done more often it becomes subconscious.

They may improve incontinence from a spastic bladder (urge incontinence). For urge incontinence these exercises help retrain your bladder. When these muscles contract, they send a message to the bladder to relax. Every time you feel the urge to urinate, contract the pelvic floor muscles to try to make the feeling subside. You will start to see some improvement in about 4 weeks.

Kegel exercises improve urine control in 50-90% of women who use them. Biofeedback might be used with this or other treatments to improve your response. Biofeedback is a process that tells you about your body functions. This helps you to gain control of these same functions.

Before you can start this exercise program you must be able to locate the pelvic muscle group and be aware when you are doing the contractions correctly. You need to differentiate this muscle group from your thigh, buttocks, or abdominal muscles. Stopping the flow of urine is a good way to ensure you are correctly contracting the right group of muscles. Once you are certain that you know what muscles you are supposed to be contracting do not do these exercises while urinating. Do them during your normal daily activities such as driving the car, watching TV, stopping at a red light, standing in line, while brushing your teeth, etc.

EXERCISES:

- Set I: Quick contractions: Tighten-relax the PC muscles as fast as you can.
Set II: Slow contractions: Contract the PC muscles and hold to a count of (3) three seconds, gradually increasing to (10) ten seconds per exercise daily. Then relax completely before the next contraction. A contraction and relaxation should both be of equal duration. **Your goal should be to hold for up to 10 seconds, then release for 10 seconds / 10-20 times in a row / at least 3 times a day.**

Exercise of any muscle uses energy and may cause some fatigue initially. You may experience some feelings of arousal during the exercises. Many women find the exercises improve their sexual satisfaction.

Do not expect results until after six weeks of conscientious exercise. This needs to be part of your daily life forever.