

# KEGEL EXERCISES

Kegel (pelvic floor) exercises are recommended for pregnant and postpartum women to strengthen the muscles in the vaginal and perineal area, especially a muscle called the pubococcygeus (P.C.) muscle. Having this muscle in good tone is important as you prepare for labor and delivery. It also helps you recover more quickly after having your baby. The exercise is named after Dr. Arnold Kegel, the physician who developed it.

The muscle that you "squeeze" while doing Kegel exercises is the same muscle you use to start and stop your urine flow. Practice doing this several times on the toilet so that you know what muscle to tense. You should try not to squeeze your thighs or abdomen. You are trying to tighten only the muscles of your pelvic floor around your vagina and anus. Kegel exercises can be done while sitting, standing, or lying down.

To do "Kegels", firmly tighten the muscles around your vagina and anus, and hold them for 5 to 10 seconds. Slowly release the muscles and relax. Repeat this at least four more times. Try to do this exercise in sets of five 10 second contractions eight times a day!

Reference:

Nettina, S., Editor (2001). *The Lippincott Manual of Nursing Practice* (7<sup>th</sup> edition). Philadelphia: Lippincott.



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