

Pelvic floor exercises with breathing

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Diaphragm breathing

There are two main types of breathing: chest breathing and diaphragm breathing

- Chest breathing - chest rises as you inhale and falls as you exhale
- Diaphragm breathing - the chest is relatively still, belly rises as you inhale and falls as you exhale

Diaphragm breathing helps the pelvic floor muscle work better. It is good for relaxation and stress management (two things we can all benefit from). It may take lots of practice, be patient and practice often. Work with your physical therapist. Here are some ideas to help

- Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Breathe regularly and observe what happens to your hands.
- Try to pull your belly muscle in as you exhale. You should then feel the belly rise as you inhale.
- Do not take deep breaths to start
- Sometimes it helps to gently press in on the belly to focus your attention as you inhale and press out on your hand on the belly
- It is often best to start lying down but you should practice the exercises in all positions - side lying, sitting, standing, on hands and knees, lying on the belly

Belly with pelvic floor muscle exercises

Take a diaphragm breath in then exhale and contract the pelvic floor muscles during the exhale. Coughing, sneezing and laughing are all exhales and it is important to learn how to contract the pelvic floor muscle during these activities to avoid [extra abdominal pressure](#). Practice this until you can perform the pelvic floor muscle contract on the exhale easily and naturally.

Pelvic floor muscle strengthening exercises

It is important to keep breathing during pelvic floor muscle strengthening exercises - DO NOT hold your breath. It is sometimes hard to avoid especially when you are holding for 7 or 10 seconds. Many people find it helps to count out loud or speak during the hold. If you are making a sound you are not holding your breath.

Pelvic floor muscle exercises with sound

Specific sounds seem to make the pelvic floor muscle exercises harder or easier. There is not a specific order and each person experiences a different result. If you want to make the exercises harder try contracting the pelvic floor muscle while saying the following sounds. There is not time assigned to these exercises, just exhale naturally as long as you do (9 3 to 4 seconds is common)

- fffffff
- sssssss
- ch ch ch ch

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