

Pelvic Floor Muscle Overactivity

Like any other muscle pelvic floor muscles can become tight or go into spasm from overactivity. Overactive pelvic floor muscles can have increased tension and/or can't fully relax, a bit like having very tight and painful neck muscles that won't relax. Having a strong pelvic floor is important to support your pelvic organs and control your continence and bowel movements. It's also important that you can relax these muscles so that you can have sex comfortably and empty your bladder and bowel correctly.

What causes pelvic floor muscle overactivity?

- Too much pelvic floor exercise and not enough relaxation
- Doing too much intense abdominal core exercises or holding in your stomach
- Pelvic surgery
- Pelvic infection or inflammation
- Recurrent infections such as cystitis or thrush
- Pelvic trauma
- Poor posture
- Emotional factors
- It is commonly linked with conditions such as painful bladder syndrome, vaginismus, vulvodynia and endometriosis.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Difficulty urinating and emptying the bladder
- Interrupted urine flow
- Painful urination
- Constipation
- Pain during or after bowel movements
- Pain in the lower back, pelvis, hips, coccyx, genitals and/or rectum
- Pain during intercourse
- Pain when you insert a tampon or have a gynaecological examination
- Pelvic floor spasms
- Pain when you do pelvic floor strengthening exercises.



Pelvic floor relaxation exercises

- ❖ Diaphragmatic breathing is where you breathe into your belly instead of your upper chest muscles. This will help the pelvic floor muscle contract and relax in a way that relieves tension.
 - Sit in an upright supported position or lie down on your back.
 - Place your hands above your waist either side of your abdomen.
 - Breathe in slowly and deeply, bringing air into the base of your lungs. Your hands should move outwards and your belly should move forwards.
 - Gently breathe out and allow your ribcage to return to the starting position.

- ❖ Relaxing the lower abdominal muscles helps to relax the pelvic floor muscles. Like in the deep breathing exercise above, position your hands over your lower abdomen and allow it to relax and bulge forwards into your hands.

- ❖ Pelvic floor muscle relaxation
 - Either lie on your back with a pillow under your knees or on your side with a pillow between your thighs.
 - There are three openings to your pelvis – your vagina, anus and urethra, where your urine comes out. Try to notice any feelings of tension or sensations in and around these openings.
 - Try to gently relax the muscles in and around your pelvic openings and allow your pelvic floor to move downwards without straining. This should not feel uncomfortable.
 - Try to combine these exercises with your abdominal breathing.

- ❖ Total body relaxation- Anxiety and stress can cause tension in your pelvic floor. One by one, relax the muscles of your whole body.

Good posture

Good posture can keep pressure off your bladder and pelvic organs. Good posture is also important in helping your diaphragm, pelvic floor and abdominal muscles to work well together and allow deep breathing. Stretching techniques also can help you avoid tightening and spasms in the pelvic floor muscles.

