

Pelvic Floor Awareness

The Three Incontinence Questions – 3IQ

1. During the last 3 months, have you leaked urine (even a small amount)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No >> questionnaire completed
2. During the last 3 months, did you leak urine (check all that apply):
 - a. When you were performing some physical activity, such as coughing, sneezing, lifting or exercise?
 - b. When you had the urge or the feeling that you needed to empty your bladder, but you could not get to the toilet fast enough?
 - c. Without physical activity and without a sense of urgency?
3. During the last 3 months, did you leak urine most often (check only one):
 - a. When you are performing some physical activities such as coughing, sneezing and lifting or exercise?
 - b. When you had the urge or the feeling that you needed to empty your bladder but you could not get to the toilet fast enough?
 - c. Without physical activity and without a sense of urgency?
 - d. About equally as often with physical activities as with a sense of urgency?

(Brown, Bradley, Subak, Richter, Kraus & Brubaker, 2006):715–23.

Response to question 3	Type of incontinence
a. Most often with physical activity	Stress only or stress predominant
b. Most often with the urge to empty the bladder	Urge only or urge predominant
c. Without physical activity or sense of urgency	Other cause only or other cause predominant
d. About equally with physical activity and sense of urgency	Mixed

Finding your Pelvic Floor Muscles

Method 1 - Stopping the flow

Stopping the flow of urine repeatedly on the toilet is not an exercise, but a way of identifying your pelvic floor muscles. This should only be done to identify which muscles are needed for bladder control. If you can, stop the flow of urine over the toilet for a second or two, then relax and finish emptying without straining. This 'stop-test' may help you identify the muscles around the front passage which control the flow of urine. It is not recommended as a regular exercise.

Method 2 - Visualisation

Another method to identify your pelvic floor muscles is to imagine stopping the flow of urine and holding in flatus (wind) at the same time. This can be done lying down, sitting or standing with legs about shoulder width apart.

- Relax the muscles of your thighs, bottom and tummy
- Squeeze in the muscles around the front passage as if trying to stop the flow of urine
- Squeeze in the muscles around the vagina and suck upwards inside the pelvis
- Squeeze in the muscles around the back passage as if trying to stop passing wind
- The muscles around the front and back passages should squeeze up and inside the pelvis
- Identify the muscles that contract when you do all these things together. Then relax and loosen them.

Exercising your Pelvic Floor Muscles

If you have mastered the art of contracting your pelvic floor muscles correctly, you can try holding the inward squeeze for longer (up to 10 seconds) before relaxing. Make sure you can breathe easily while you squeeze.

If you can do this exercise, repeat it up to 10 times, but only as long as you can do it with perfect technique while breathing quietly and keeping everything above the belly button relaxed. This can be done more often during the day to improve control.

Resources

- www.continence.org.au
- www.pelvicfloorfirst.com.au
- National Continence Helpline 1800 33 00 66

Referral Pathway

Your local doctor or a continence professional via www.continence.org.au/service-providers.php

The information in this resource has been provided for educational purposes only. Family Planning NSW has taken every care to ensure that the information is accurate and up-to-date at the time of publication. Individuals concerned about any personal reproductive or sexual health issue are encouraged to seek advice and assistance from their health care provider or visit a Family Planning NSW clinic.

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