



### **Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises**

Special pelvic floor muscle exercises were developed by a doctor named Kegel (so they are sometimes called "Kegels"). They work in mild cases of stress incontinence and is often related to weak pelvic floor muscles. Since these inner muscles are under our voluntary control, we can exercise them to build up their strength and bulk, like a body builder builds up outer muscles.

#### **Why should I do these exercises?**

The pelvic floor muscles act as a sling to keep the bladder neck lifted; they also form the external sphincter. Sometimes these muscles weaken, allowing pelvic organs to drop down. By doing specific exercises over a period of time, you can tighten up and strength the pelvic floor and sphincter muscles.

#### **How do I do them and when?**

Sit on the toilet and start to urinate. Try to stop the flow of urine midstream by contracting (tightening) your pelvic floor muscles. These are the same muscles used to stop a bowel movement. Repeat several times or until you are sure of the action and sensation of consciously contracting these muscles. Do not tighten your abdominal, leg or buttock muscles.

For stress incontinence, repeat the exercise four times, holding each contraction for a count of four. Do this every hour whether at your desk or watching TV. To be effective these exercises should be performed daily for at least 2-3 months.

#### **Bladder Drill**

For urge incontinence the same exercise can be used to do a "bladder drill" that re-trains your bladder. When the external sphincter contracts, it signals the bladder to relax, causing the urge to eventually subside. Every time you feel urinary urgency, try to stop the feeling by contracting your pelvic floor muscles. Try to hold your urine a little longer each time, gradually increasing the time between urinating to 2, 3, or 4 hours. You should start to see improvement in 2-3 weeks.