

Make Your Kegels Count

You've probably heard of Kegel exercises. Maybe you've even tried to practice them. But before you try again, make sure you know how to do them properly.

Done correctly, Kegel exercises strengthen the muscles around the vagina, urethra and rectum, and improve your ability to control those muscles. "But if you do them wrong, you'll actually weaken those muscles," says physical therapist Karen Snowden of Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network. Here's how to do them the right way.

- First, locate these muscles by stopping and starting your urine when you use the toilet.
- Tighten and release the muscles very gradually. As you tighten, think of an elevator going slowly up to the 4th floor; then release very slowly, one "floor" at a time.
- As you tighten the muscles, you should feel the area from the urethra (where urine exits the body) to the rectum lift slightly.
- Practice while you sit, stand, walk, drive or watch TV.
- Begin with five repetitions, three times a day. Work up to 10-15 repetitions, five to 10 times a day.



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