

# Pelvic Muscle Exercise (PME)

## A Simple Way To Help Improve Bladder Control

### PME Offers Many Benefits

- Proven effective for both young and older persons.
- Drug-free and surgery-free.
- Easy to learn.
- Discreet – can be done anywhere.
- Takes just a few minutes each day.

### Regaining Control With PME...

While you can manage incontinence with absorbent products, it's important to know that you can also reduce – or even overcome – the loss of bladder control. You can do this yourself, without drugs or surgery.

Incontinence has many causes, one of which is weakened pelvic muscles. These muscles can be weakened by pregnancy and childbirth, menopause and aging. Certain conditions and events, such as prostate surgery, can also weaken these muscles or affect your control over them.

Like muscles in other parts of your body, pelvic muscles can get stronger. You can build them up with a series of simple, repetitive movements called PME. Another name for PME is Kegel (Pronounced like “eagle”) Exercises.

### Who Can Benefit From PME?

Researchers have found that women with stress or urge incontinence can benefit from Pelvic Muscle Exercise. Men who suffer from urge incontinence, or who have undergone prostate surgery, are likely to achieve positive results as well.

### What Is PME?

PME is a series of contractions designed to strengthen the two major muscles which stretch across the pelvic floor. The biggest one stretches like a hammock from front to back and forms the sphincter, a ring-like band which closes off the urethra **A**. The other **B** is shaped like a triangle.

These muscles attach to the front, back and sides of the pelvis bone **C**. They act as a sling, holding the bladder in place, and form the sphincter surrounding the urethra. Together, these muscles prevent leaking of urine and stool.

PME was introduced in 1948 by Dr. Arnold H. Kegel, a gynecologist who designed the repetitive movements as a way to help his older patients control the leaking of urine. The movements are frequently referred to as “Kegel Exercises.”

Done properly, these exercises have been very effective in treating mild to moderate stress incontinence and urge incontinence.

### How Easy Is PME?

PMEs are ideal in their simplicity. As you become more adept at doing them, you will find you can do them quickly and discreetly, almost anywhere... while doing dishes, watching TV or even sitting in your car at a traffic signal!

### Here's How You Do PME:

#### 1. Find the correct muscles.

This is extremely important. To locate the proper muscles, try stopping the flow of urine while using the bathroom. Or imagine that you are trying to keep from “passing gas.” The muscles you squeeze are your pelvic muscles.

For women, you may also try lying down and placing your finger inside your vagina. Squeeze as you would to stop a flow of urine from coming out. If you feel tightness on your finger, you are squeezing the right muscles.

#### 2. Use only the pelvic muscles.

Be careful not to tighten your stomach, legs, or buttocks, which can put more pressure on your bladder. You should feel no movement of the muscles in these areas while doing PME.

#### 3. Contract the pelvic muscles, starting slowly.

Lie down, and pull in the pelvic muscles, holding for a count of three. Then relax completely for a count of three. With time, you'll be able to hold the squeeze for a count of 10. Work up to 10 to 15 repeats, each time you exercise.

#### 4. Repeat these exercises three times per day, using a different position each time: Lying, sitting and standing.

Each set should take about five minutes. And remember, you can do them virtually anywhere!

#### 5. Add quick contraction sets, if needed.

Your doctor may also want you to work on quickening your pelvic muscle reaction time. You can do this by tightening and relaxing the pelvic muscle as quickly as possible. Be careful not to hold your breath, strain or use other muscle groups.

#### 6. Be patient.

It doesn't happen right away, but most people begin to notice an improvement in bladder control after three to six weeks.

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## How Does Pelvic Muscle Exercise (PME) Work?

PME works in much the same way as any regular exercise regimen does, by increasing:

- Pelvic muscle strength and endurance.
- Reflex action and muscle control.
- Overall awareness of the muscles.

Your doctor may suggest using a biofeedback device to help make your PME more effective.

Biofeedback means using the body's signals as information about how well it is performing. Biofeedback devices easily and painlessly measure the strength and endurance of muscle contractions. They can also be used to help you determine if you are doing the exercises correctly.

### Ask Your Doctor

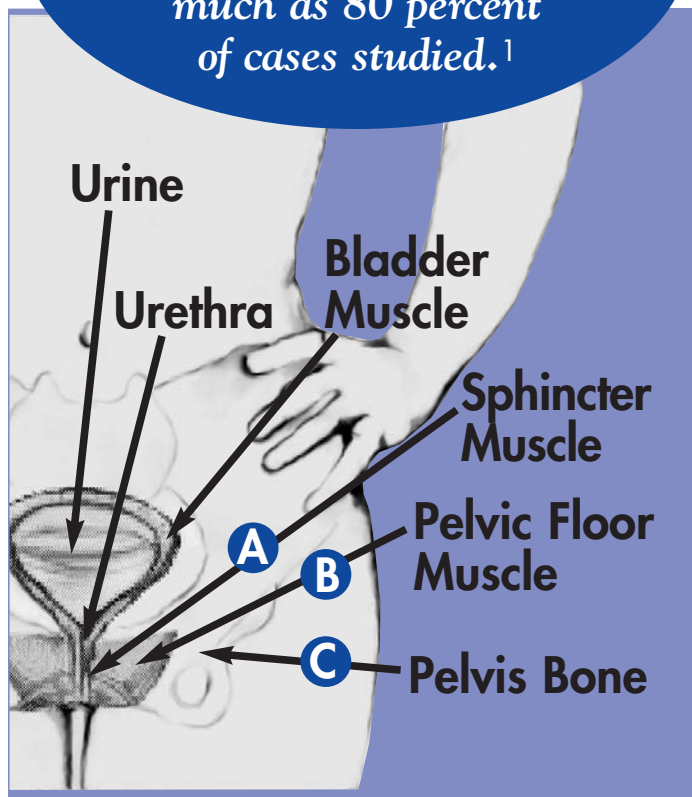
Your healthcare professionals will help determine if PME is right for you. Be sure to consult them before beginning a PME program.

### And Remember...We're Here To Help!

The friendly, knowledgeable Medicaid Specialist at HDIS are just a phone call away, ready with good advice and the largest selection of trusted products to help you feel confident every day.

For discreet consultation and home delivery of incontinence and related products, just call us toll-free at **1-800-367-8360**.

*Women have experienced dramatic results using PME, showing improvement in as much as 80 percent of cases studied.<sup>1</sup>*



Some information for this educational brochure was provided by the National Institutes for Health. HDIS would also especially like to thank authors Diane Kaschak Newman, Dorothy B. Smith and others, whose work assisted us in developing this brochure. For more information, consult your healthcare professional.

<sup>1</sup>Newman, Diane Kaschak, *The Urinary Incontinence Sourcebook*. Los Angeles: Lowell House, division of NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group, Inc., 1999. (Available from HDIS)



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