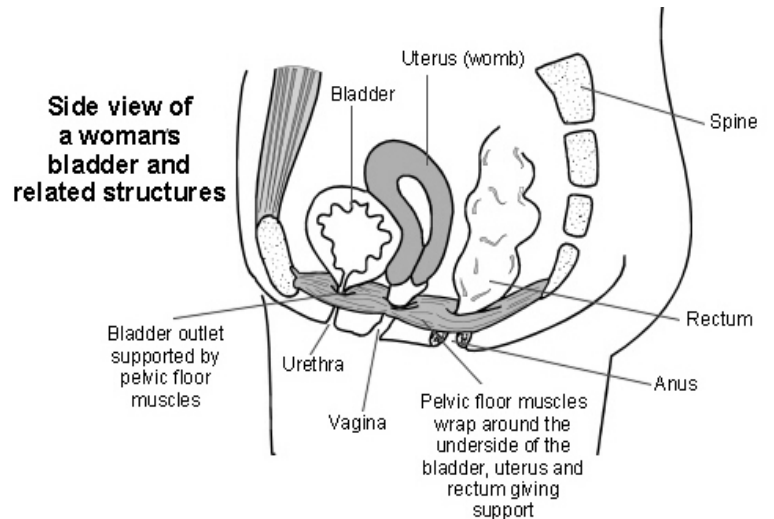


## EXERCISES FOR OVERACTIVE AND PAINFUL PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

### Review of pelvic floor muscle (PFM) anatomy

The pelvic floor muscles:

- Attach to your pubic bone at the front and tail bone at the back
- Support your pelvic organs in the pelvis
- Surround the openings of your urethra, vagina and rectum
- Pelvic floor muscles:
  - are important for *pleasurable* sexual sensation
  - should be supple, flexible, strong, well-coordinated and able to relax just like any other muscle
  - help to prevent leakage from your bladder and bowel by *squeezing* your urethra and anus tightly closed.
  - support your pelvic organs by *lifting* especially when there is a downward pressure during coughing, sneezing, lifting, pushing and pulling activities



Pelvic floor muscles can become overactive in some women, including (but not limited to) those who have/had: current/past vaginal infections; urinary tract infections; bowel trouble; perineal tears from childbirth; endometriosis/polycystic ovarian syndrome or a painful or unwanted sexual experience/other trauma.

Having overactive PFMs is like having a 'headache in the pelvis', or a 'muscle cramp' which at times, can become very painful – like when having sex, inserting a tampon or having a PAP smear. The good news is, that the PFMs are similar to other muscles in the body and over time, with the right treatment, may be re-trained to soften and let go of excess tension resulting in less pain.



## A beginners guide to pelvic floor muscle re-training for overactive muscles

### *Step 1: Position and breathing focus:*

- find some uninterrupted quite time to yourself
- find a position of comfort – maybe laying down with your knees supported over pillows
- place one hand on your chest and one hand on your lower belly and notice what happens when you breath in and out.....
- take a slow gentle breath in through your nose and see if you can make the breath go all the way down into your belly, bulging your lower belly into your hand – gently let the breath out. Repeat 3-5x

### *Step 2: Pelvic floor muscle focus: practicing awareness of PFM movement*

- start with normal gentle breathing
- gently contract your pelvic floor by squeezing the anus and vagina closed and drawing inwards
- hold this for a couple of seconds then release
- ***notice how this movement feels: when you squeeze inwards.....when you hold...and when you let go***
- after you have let go and released the muscles, wait for a few breaths in relaxation and then repeat this sequence 3-5x

CONTINUE TO REPEAT STEPS 1 AND 2 AND DO THIS FOR 3-5 CYCLES

DO THESE EXERCISES AT LEAST ONCE PER DAY

You can also do these exercises throughout your busy day in any position, even for the briefest amount of time.

Remember to be calm, kind and gentle to yourself

