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Pelvic Floor Strengthening Exercises

Rebuilding your pelvic floor strength is important in order to avoid urinary incontinence and/or pelvic organ prolapse. As you age, you are more likely to experience symptoms of pelvic floor weakness. Practicing these exercises along with eating well, maintaining a healthy weight, and working with your health care providers will help you maintain a healthy pelvic floor. Be sure to have your provider check your abdomen for diastasis recti – an opening in the abdominal wall which may contribute to pelvic floor dysfunction. UTIs are common when a pelvic floor is weak. Please see your provider for treatment.

Constructive Rest Position (CRP):

- Lie on your back. Adjust your position so your spine is as long and straight as possible.
- Allow your neck to be long and straighten your head. Neither tuck your chin, nor arch your neck.
- Bend your knees with feet on the floor and a comfortable distance from your buttocks OR prop your calves on a chair – shoulder width apart.
- Allow your knees to flop together. If they do not meet, relax your legs even more and give it time.
- Rest one arm across your upper chest and the other on top of it, or across your belly if your breasts are full.
- Completely relax your body and allow your breath to flow easily.
- Let your mind float – pray, meditate.

Posture:

- Stand in front of a mirror and check:
 - Shoulders lie evenly
 - Shoulders are not slumped forward or pulled back
 - Chest is not sunken or lifted
 - Abdomen is neither rigid nor soft
 - Tailbone is pointed toward the floor (not tucked or pointing outward)
 - Hips are over feet
 - Knees are soft
 - Jaw is released with ears over shoulders
 - Energy moves up the front of your body and down the back

Pelvic floor exercises:

- While in proper alignment when lying down or sitting:
- Contract and lift the muscles of your pelvic floor (elevator).
- Feel the gradual ascent of your muscles as the contraction reaches deep into your vagina.
- Hold, varying the length of time you hold, from a few seconds to one or two minutes.
- Release slowly, controlling the release.
- Try squeezing and relaxing quickly.
- Breathe deeply.
- Check your strength by inserting 2 fingers into your vagina and squeezing. Feel your ability to tighten and relax. Don't worry – your strength will return over time.
- **Squat often**
- *If you are no long incontinent, only focus on squatting. You may see if you can Kegel while squatting.*

Belly Squeezes (Abdominal Pull-ins):

- Lying in bed or sitting up straight:
- Slowly tighten your belly as you exhale – focus on the space between your pelvic bones
- Imagine you are drawing your belly button to your spine
- Gradually release your breath
- Lay your hands on your abdomen and feel your healing energy reach deep into your tissues

Recti Persuasion:

- Start out in CRP
- Place your right hand on your left side of your waist and your left hand on your right side of your waist – your arms will be crossed
- Breathe in deeply
- As you exhale, pull your hands across your abdominals toward your midline and gently squeeze the recti back together
- Begin with only 3-5, and increase at a comfortable pace. Repeat often as you like.

Hip Curl:

- Begin in CRP, arms by your side, palms facing down
- Keeping your lower back planted firmly on the floor or bed, exhale and curl your pelvis up – about 3 inches – try to **Kegel as you rise**
- Hold in this position and squeeze your Kegel muscle as long as you can without straining
- Inhale as you release your pelvis back onto the floor or bed
- Repeat 5-10 times a day in the first week, then increase as you like

Knee Hug:

- Begin in CRP with arms by your sides
- Exhale with a strong hiss and bend your legs bringing your knees into your chest
- Hug your knees to your chest
- Rock on the bottom 3 inches of your spine several times so you feel warmth in your lower back
- Gently roll to your side, then center, then opposite side – Repeat as you like

Seated Ball Posture (practice with an exercise/yoga ball):

- Sit on the ball with your weight evenly distributed on your sit bones, sit tall, and pull abdominal muscles in
- Your knees and hips should form a right angle with your feet flat on the floor.
- Pull shoulder blades back and down
- For 5-10 minutes, hold this posture as you practice exhaling as you contract your Kegel muscle and inhale as you release your Kegel muscle

Seated Ball Marching (practice with exercise/yoga ball):

- Sit on the center of the ball with good posture and balance with feet hip width apart – place hands on the ball at your sides
- Exhale, contract your abdominal muscles and Kegel as you raise the right leg about 2-3 inches from the floor and hold for 2 seconds
- Inhale, relax your Kegel and lower your foot
- Repeat on each side until you have completed 10 on each side

Arm Circles on Your Back (practice with exercise/yoga ball):

- Sit with good ball posture in center of ball
- Walk your feet in front of you until your thighs are parallel to the floor and roll your spine off the ball until your upper back and head are resting on the ball
- Place your arms by the side of your legs – keep your back straight and bottom lifted up by pushing through your heels
- Inhale, relax your Kegel muscle and raise your arms straight over your head
- Exhale, contract your Kegel muscle and abdominal muscles and roll your arms out to the sides until your hands touch the sides of your legs (like a snow angel motion)
- Repeat 10 times
- Practice Knee Hug when finished

References:

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