

ADVICE SHEET FOR PELVIC FLOOR

WHAT IS THE PELVIC FLOOR

The pelvic floor contains layers of muscles and connective tissue that span the bottom of the pelvis. These muscles function to support the pelvic organs, assist in urinary and faecal continence, facilitate birth, aid in sexual performance, and maintain ideal intra-abdominal pressure. The pelvic floor is a component of your 'core muscles' and therefore plays a role in lower back & pelvic stability.

WHAT ARE POTENTIAL ISSUES OF THE PELVIC FLOOR

The pelvic floor muscles can be weakened and cause the pelvic organs to not be fully supported. This can make it difficult to control bodily functions. These muscles can become loose due to pregnancy, chronic coughing, heavy lifting, age, and obesity.

SYMPTOMS OF PROBLEM WITH PELVIC FLOOR

- Leaking urine when laughing, coughing or exercising
- Losing control of bladder or bowel.
- Rapid/constant need to get to the toilet
- Pain in pelvic area
- Painful intercourse

HOW TO LOOK AFTER IT AT HOME

Pelvic floor exercises are created to strengthen the muscles. These exercises can be done by lying down, sitting or standing. When doing the exercises, be sure to focus on your pelvic floor muscles and relax your abdominal (stomach) muscles.

The easiest way to engage your pelvic floor is to imagine you are passing urine and trying to stop the flow. It is important not to practice this as you are going to the toilet as it can increase the risk of a urinary tract infection.

Exercises to improve your strength include:

- Engaging the muscles for 5 to 10 seconds and breathe normally. Release slowly and repeat up to 10 times.
- Repeatedly perform quick squeezes to turn the muscles on and off repeatedly.
- Engage the muscles prior to when clearing your throat or coughing.

PROFESSIONAL TREATMENT

Since the pelvic floor is hidden from view, any problem has the potential to be undiagnosed for an extended period of time. Seeking help from a pelvic floor physiotherapist can help to effectively treat problems and strengthen the pelvic floor.

PREVENTION

- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, fiber and water to prevent constipation
- Be active
- Seek professional help when needed.