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KEGEL EXERCISES

Loss of urine with coughing or walking up stairs is a circumstance common to many women. It is the result of a gradual weakness of your pelvic muscles. These are large muscles, as big as your two hands, and are the support of the organs within the pelvis; namely the uterus, urinary bladder, vagina and rectum. The openings of the urinary bladder, vagina and rectum are between these muscles. The sides of these openings attach into these large pelvic muscles. Each time you cough or sneeze they go down and out. However, when you shut off the flow of urine or hold in a bowel movement you elevate and bring the muscles together and temporarily shut off the openings. With continued exercise, the tissue between the muscles is permanently strengthened. This, in turn, improves your ability to hold urine. These are the muscles that are stretched out of the way during childbirth; they are often injured, sometimes severely. Exercise of these muscles is the most important act you can perform to recover completely from having a baby.

These muscles are just like arm muscles in that you can exercise them at will. They can be strengthened by exercise or can become weak from lack of use. The only way you can exercise these muscles is by shutting off or pulling in feeling within the pelvis. If you exercise these muscles a few times every hour without fail, within a few weeks they will become strengthened so they will actually be larger and stronger. You will then stay dry, and continued exercise will help keep you that way. It has taken years for this relaxation to take place, so it will take time to make the muscles strong again. It will be easier after a few weeks when you have established a habit pattern.

INSTRUCTIONS

Relax your chest and abdomen. Do not hold your breath as this will keep you from feeling the tight pulling-up in the pelvis. Do not move your hips or tighten your thighs. The feeling must be from inside your pelvis.

Now, pull up high inside as if you are shutting off a bowel movement; relax for three seconds. Now, pull up high inside as if you are shutting off your urine; relax. Now, try to pull up high in the vagina. You may not be able to hold your contraction very long at first, but you should try to hold in for three seconds; then relax for at least three seconds before your next attempt. You will not get a full, strong muscle pull until you are able to hold for several seconds at each contraction.

You must practice this pelvic muscle contraction ten times every half hour. You may do so just as easily when you are sitting or standing as when lying down. Each time you go to the bathroom to urinate, try to shut off the flow of urine several times. Ten strong contractions at any one time is sufficient for good muscle strengthening. Do not continue beyond ten contractions as you will tire easily and the contractions will not be sufficient strength to help. Also, many contractions at one time may produce fatigue and pelvic tenderness.

Remember:

1. Only the strong contractions are helpful. Try to hold each one at least three seconds and then relax for at least three seconds until the next attempt, but do not strain down. Repeat ten times at each exercise period during the day.
2. Do several exercise groups if possible before arising.
3. With each change in activity during the day, do an exercise group.
4. Drink more water so that you will urinate more often. Do not try to hold urine for long intervals. The urinary bladder is strengthened by emptying. Temporarily you may lose more urine than when you voided less. Try to shut off the urine several times at each voiding.
5. On a calendar, each day list the exercise groups. By the end of each day, at least twenty exercises periods should be listed. Contraction of the pelvic muscles is the only exercise which will help your urine control. Remember, your urine control is dependent on a habit of exercise.