



Pelvic Floor Therapy Exercise Handout

Resource Description: This document is a resource provided to patients providing instructions on how to perform various pelvic floor exercises to aid urinary incontinence symptoms.

This project was funded under grant number 1U18HS028742-01 from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The authors are solely responsible for this document's contents, findings, and conclusions, which do not necessarily represent the views of AHRQ or of HHS. Readers should not interpret any statement in this report as an official position of AHRQ or of HHS. None of the authors has any affiliation or financial involvement that conflicts with the material presented in this report.

Balancing On One Leg

1. Hold on to the chair back with both hands.
2. Lift one leg off the ground, slowly.
3. Maintain your balance while standing on one leg for 5 seconds.
4. Return to the starting position and repeat 5 times. Try to increase the time spent standing on one leg.
5. Perform with opposite leg.

Reps: 5 Times

Hold: 5 seconds

Complete: 2 sets per leg

Perform 3 times a day



BRIDGE – BRIDGING

While lying on your back with knees bent, tighten your lower abdominal muscles, squeeze your buttocks and then raise your buttocks off the floor/bed as creating a "Bridge" with your body. Hold and then lower yourself and repeat.

Reps: 10 Times

Hold: 3 seconds

Complete 1 set

Perform 3 times a day



Standing Gluteal Contractions

Stand with your feet straight.

Squeeze and Release your BUTTOCK muscles.

****DO NOT** squeeze your abs or inner thighs or hamstrings.

This exercise promotes proper weight distribution in a standing position and strengthen your gluteal muscles.

Reps: 20 Times

Hold: 3 seconds

Complete 1 set

Perform 3 times a day



Hip Internal Rotation Isometric

While laying down on your back, have legs straight and toes pulled back. Have someone place their hands on affected leg as shown in the picture (you can also place a pillow in between your legs and use that as resistance). Press into their hands for a count of 6 seconds. Repeat this 20-30 times.

Reps: 20 Times

Hold: 6 seconds

Complete 1 set

Perform 2 times a day



Reverse Clamshells in Sitting

Start off in sitting position with back upright. Put a small pillow in between the knees. Push both knees into the pillow while gently swinging both feet away from each other. Return back to starting position.

Reps: 10 Times

Hold: 3 seconds

Complete 1 set

Perform 3 times a day



Sideways Walking

Standing at a support surface (table or counter top) use hands to assist with balance if needed. Walk to one side in your “safe walking area” (near stable surfaces). Keep feet and hips pointing forward as you walk to the side. Walk sideways in the opposite direction to starting position. Perform sideways walking down and back for 10 minutes or until you feel that you need to take break.

It may be help to place a chair close to allow for safe rest breaks.



Side Lying Clamshells

1. Lie on your side with your hips stacked and knees bent.
2. Lift and contract your pelvic-floor muscles, and begin to lightly exhale.
3. Raise your top knee upwards while keeping your feet in contact the entire time. Pause for 3 seconds with your knees open, then return to the starting position and release the pelvic-floor contraction. Do not let your pelvis roll back during the lifting movement.
4. Complete 10 repetitions, then perform on other side.

Reps: 10 times

Hold: 3 seconds

Complete: 1-2 sets per side

Perform: 1-2 sets per day

Why? The clamshell exercise can specifically help to strengthen the gluteus medius, which lays on the outer edge of the buttocks and is responsible for stabilizing your pelvis. Clamshell exercises can help to balance the muscular effort between your inner and outer thighs and your pelvic floor.



Side Lying Reverse Clamshells

1. Lie on your side with your hips stacked and knees bent.
2. Lift and contract your pelvic-floor muscles, and begin to lightly exhale.
3. Keeping your knees together, raise your top foot as high as you comfortably can. Pause for 3 seconds, then return to the starting position and release the pelvic-floor contraction.
4. Complete 10 repetitions, then perform on other side.

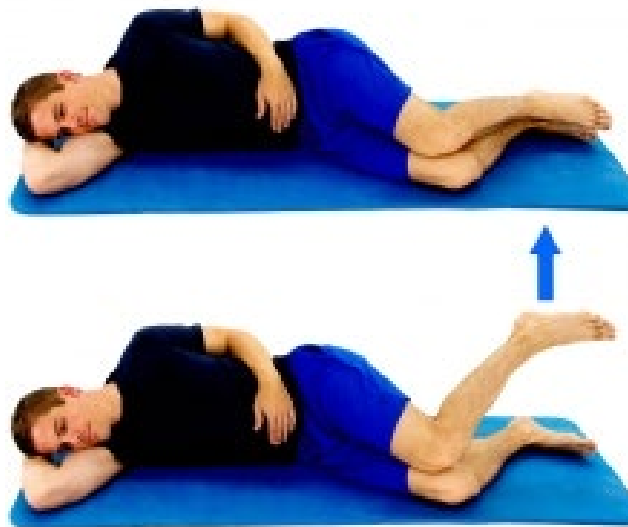
Reps: 10 times

Hold: 3 seconds

Complete: 1-2 sets per side

Perform: 1-2 sets per day

Why? The reverse clamshell is a modified version of the clamshell exercise that targets the inner thighs and helps to sculpt and tighten the muscles. This move also strengthens the outer thighs, tones the glutes, and helps stabilize the pelvic muscles.



Transverse Abdominal (TA) Muscle Activation

1. Lay on your back, with knees bent and feet flat on the floor
2. Place 2 fingers at either side of your abdomen area at height of your naval but wide enough apart that you are NOT on top of the rectus abdominis (6-pack muscles).
3. Take a slow, big inhale.
4. On the exhale - visualize tilting your pelvis back just slightly and drawing in your belly button toward your back bone. (Basically like trying to zip up a tight pair of pants).
5. You should feel the TA muscle pull in and away from your fingers.
6. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax and repeat.

Reps: 10 times

Hold: 5 seconds

Perform: 1-2 sets per day

Why? The TA muscles are deep muscles that work very closely with the pelvic floor. Along with providing support to the lower back, the transverse abdominal muscle is responsible for maintaining proper placement of the abdominal contents.



Transverse Abdominal (TA) Heel Slides

1. Lie on back and bend both knees up. Take a deep inhale.
2. Contract your TA muscles as you learned in the previous exercise.
3. Keeping the left knee bent, exhale and slowly push the right leg out until its straight (heel slide).
4. Inhale and pull your leg back in to starting position.
5. Relax your abdominals and repeat the same steps with the left leg.

Reps: 5-10 times per leg

Time: slide out for 3 seconds, slide in for 3 seconds

Perform: 1-2 sets per day

Why? Heel Slide exercises are a great way to strengthen and restore function to the deep core system. The deep core system consists of the muscles in the abdominal region, also known as your abs and pelvic floor. These muscles are responsible for helping you maintain good posture and stabilize your pelvis when you walk or run.



Squats

1. Start standing with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder width apart. Note: you can use a chair, stool, or bedside for extra stability.
2. Contract the pelvic floor muscles while you bend your knees and lower your hips into a sitting position slowly to the count of five. Note: your knees should be in line with your toes. Your weight should be in your heels.
3. Maintain good spine alignment. Do not round, hunch, or arch the back.
4. Now return to standing slowly to the count of five, then release your pelvic floor muscles

Reps: 10 squats

Hold: 5 seconds

Perform: 2-3 sets per day

Why? By strengthening your glutes and hamstrings, you'll be adding additional support to your pelvic floor. These exercises can be especially helpful to prevent leaking with position changes like when you get up from a chair or out of the car.



Bird Dog

- 1.** Start on all fours with wrists under shoulders and knees under hips. Your back should be straight, and your neck should be neutral. Pull your shoulder blades down your back toward your hips
- 2.** Tighten/brace at your abdominal muscles
- 3.** Simultaneously straighten and raise your left leg and right arm, keeping your pelvis and shoulders in a neutral position. Don't raise or lower your head. Hold for 2 seconds.
- 4.** Bend and lower your leg and arm down back to the starting position while maintaining stability. Then switch, raising your right leg and left arm. This is 1 rep.
- 5.** Start with 6 repetitions, rest between sets. You can increase reps of this exercise as you feel more comfortable.

Reps: 6-10 times

Hold: 2 seconds

Perform: 1-2 sets per day

Why? This exercise strengthens muscles in the lower back, pelvic floor, and abdomen. Bracing these muscles while lifting, sneezing, coughing, and performing other exercises and sports, both strengthens and protects the pelvic floor, which can help reduce incontinence problems.



Knee Squeezes

1. Sit straight in a chair with your feet flat on the floor and knees hip-width apart. Keep your head lifted and your chin parallel to the ground, shoulders should be in line with your hips.
2. Place an exercise ball (or a firm pillow if you don't have one) between your thighs. Take a deep inhale before you begin.
3. On exhale, Squeeze the object and simultaneously contract the pelvic floor muscles. Hold this for 5 seconds. Relax for 5 seconds. Repeat 5-10 times.

For a challenge, sit up without leaning back against the chair.

Reps: 5-10 times

Hold: Start with 5 second holds and see if you can work up to 10 seconds

Perform: 1-2 sets per day

Why? This will help strengthen the inner thighs and the abdominal muscles, which intertwine with those pelvic floor muscles and can contribute to better bladder control.

