

Pelvic Floor and Abdominal "Core" Muscles

Pelvic floor muscles are the “hidden” internal muscles that support the bladder and bowel. If the pelvic floor and abdominal muscles are not functioning optimally this may result in problems such as incontinence, difficulty emptying the bladder or bowel, sexual difficulties and/or pelvic pain.

The pelvic floor muscles can be hard to identify inside the body, and up to 40% of people perform pelvic floor exercises incorrectly, which can be making their problem worse. The pelvic floor muscles form the base of your “core” and work alongside your lower abdominal muscles (Transversus Abdominals) to support the spine and control changes in abdominal pressure.

Pelvic floor exercises are very specific exercises which work three muscles simultaneously:

- ***The pelvic floor muscles*** which pull the urethra upwards and forwards
- ***The innermost abdominal corset*** that draws in towards the backbone
- ***The deep lower back muscles*** which support the spine

This group of muscles regulates the pressure inside the abdomen during everyday tasks such as coughing, lifting and during exercise. However, if any of the muscles within the “core” are not working optimally, then this regulation system becomes imbalanced and the pelvic floor muscles can be overloaded and weakened.

Situations that cause these muscles to become weakened,

- Prostate surgery
- Constipation and straining to use the bowels
- Recurrent coughing
- Being overweight / obese
- General exercise performance, i.e high impact exercise or incorrect “core bracing”
- Injury or trauma to the pelvis

You will benefit from doing correct pelvic floor and abdominal exercises if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms.

- Bladder or bowel incontinence or urgency
- Difficulty emptying the bladder or bowel

- Pelvic/ testicle/ penile/rectal pain
- Sexual dysfunction

One of our Pelvic Health Physiotherapists can assess the pelvic floor muscles and abdominal muscles by using real time ultrasound or direct assessment to teach you how to do pelvic floor and abdominal muscle exercises correctly and provide appropriate exercises to facilitate your recovery.