

**MUMÊHOOD**

# What's all the fuss about my pelvic floor?

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Most women have a vague idea that exercising the Pelvic Floor is important, but many are not sure why and even more are now sure how!

## What is the Pelvic Floor?

The Pelvic Floor is a set of muscles that are positioned between the pubic bone (at the front- inside your pubes) and your tailbone (the bottom of your spine, just above your bum crack!). The muscles sit like a hammock and hold all your pelvic organs in place. This includes your bladder, bowel, uterus and vagina.

## Why is it Important?

When these muscles are working well they support the bladder and bowel and work with them to let you pee and poo when you need to! They also support your vagina and are really important for your sex life (being able to clench and make it tighter rather than lose).

If they are not working well then you may experience urinary incontinence (wee), faecal incontinence (poo) or flatus incontinence (fart)... none of which are pleasant!

## How does Pregnancy Affect The Pelvic Floor?

As you can imagine, the weight of a growing baby in your uterus is going to put stress on this muscle and regardless of whether or not you push a baby out of your vagina or out of the sun roof, it will feel different after you have had a baby.



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The muscles will be weakened which can put you at risk of several nasty things –

- Incontinence (weeing, pooing and farting)
- Prolapse (where your pelvic organs drop down and sometimes fall out towards the opening of your vagina)
- Reduced sexual sensitivity (which you may not care about so much in the first few weeks after giving birth.. but you will do again one day)

## How Can I Strengthen My Pelvic Floor?

Regular Pelvic Floor exercises, sometimes called Kegels, can help strengthen the Pelvic Floor. Just like any muscle in your body, regular training and use will keep it in good condition.

## How Do I Find My Pelvic Floor?

The Doctor and Daughter Pelvic Floor and Pilates Guru, Jane Wake visits all our Antenatal Classes to teach all our clients how to find and exercise their Pelvic Floor muscles. She has a great tip for helping you to find them: Imagine you are stopping a fart and then imagine stopping a wee and pull upwards inside!

It can feel a bit funny the first time you give it a go, but start slowly and persevere and pretty soon it will feel like second nature.

We advise our clients to start doing them before the birth of their baby and to keep doing them every day for the rest of their lives! This can sound daunting and for this reason it's nicer not to mention recommended numbers of these exercises. It's better if you just learn how to do the exercises and then try and fit them into your daily life.



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## What Exercises Can I Do?

Jane advises the following exercises:

- Stop a fart and stop a pee and pull up gradually and then release slowly.
- Stop a fart and stop a pee and imagine your pelvic floor is a lift going up through 5 floors. Pull up to the first floor, then the second floor, then the third, fourth and then fifth! Then release and let the lift go back down again!
- Stop a fart and stop a pee and pull up and then release in quick succession!

Try and do these exercises as often as you can every single day. Every time you're sitting at a red light, brushing your teeth, changing the baby's nappy - those are great times to do a few!

The NHS "Squeezy" app is great for reminding you to do your exercises.

There are also special exercisers, like Elvie or Innovo, which aim to improve your technique and record your pelvic floor strength.

It may seem daunting if you have never tried to exercise your pelvic floor, the best news is - it is never too late to start!

## GOOD LUCK

