Kegel Exercises for Overactive Bladder

by ANGELA FINLAY

OAB Kegel Exercises to Help Strengthen Your Bladder

The muscles in your pelvis are responsible for movement, control and support of your bladder and bowels, but they can easily be neglected. Some injuries, illnesses or surgeries can also damage your pelvic muscles, which can spark a chain reaction and leave you with uncomfortable and embarrassing chronic issues. If you have an overactive bladder, Kegel exercises will help you build the right muscles for more comfort, control and confidence. Let's take a look at how you can benefit from OAB Kegel exercises.

What to Know About your Pelvic Muscles

The pelvic floor muscles stretch horizontally between the front, back and sides of the pelvic bone. Since they are right at the base of your pelvis, and not automatically stimulated with broader muscle movements, they can weaken and cause some trouble for the organs and muscles around them. In some cases, medical issues are responsible for the deterioration of your pelvic floor strength.

Pregnancy is one of the principle causes of weak pelvic floor muscles, but new mothers aren’t the only people at risk. Overactive bladder, surgical removal of the prostate and diabetes can also affect these supportive muscles. In any case, the best solution is a strengthening routine that targets those deep, specific muscles, which will require some training and concentration.

How to Practice Kegel Exercises

First, you need to find the right muscles, which can be easier said than done. It’s easy to tense up all the muscles around your hips, but that can actually put more pressure on your bladder control muscles. Instead, you need to isolate the deep band of muscles and then learn how to contract and relax them. It's important that you find the right muscles before exercising them. You can locate your pelvic floor by:

- Stopping urination in midstream
- Tightening the muscles that keep you from passing gas
- Imagining that you are trying to pick up an object with your vagina
- Tensing the muscles that bring the base of your penis closer to your abdomen

If you're still unsure about where your pelvic muscles are, you can make an appointment with a physical therapist. They will be able to help you locate the correct area, and go over the many benefits of Kegel exercises with you. Plus, they can ensure that your exercise routine fits your current condition appropriately.

Once you’ve located your pelvic floor muscles, begin to contract them in sets. Lie down on your back with your knees bent and separated, then tighten the muscles and hold for three seconds. Relax the muscles for three more seconds before you tighten again. Repeat this contracting and relaxing 10 to 12 times at first, and then add a few more repetitions as your pelvic floor strengthens.

Tips for Better Results

Changes happen gradually, so be patient. Start with 12 repetitions per set, and do about three or four sets each day. Make sure that you don’t overdo it and strain your muscles. It's also important to remember to breathe while you exercise; don't hold your breath, as you will only stress out your body.

You might find it easier to work your sets into your daily activities rather than setting aside a block of time for your exercise. Here are some easy ways to add OAB Kegel exercises into your daily routines:

- Do a set first thing in the morning, during breakfast or in the shower
- Do a set right after you use the bathroom
- Do a set right before you sneeze, cough or laugh. All of these actions contract your abdomen
- Do a set when you’re driving to work, or on your commute home

Benefits of Kegel Exercises

If you stick with your Kegel exercises, you should start to see results in three to six weeks. Some of the most recognizable benefits will include:

- Being able to hold your bladder for longer
- Experiencing fewer leaks
- Reduce the feeling of needing to urinate right after going to the bathroom

Try to practice your OAB Kegel exercises while sitting, standing and lying down, so you strengthen all parts of your pelvic floor. Keep at it, and you’ll find that your bladder issues are much easier to handle, which is bound to improve your quality of life.