

# A brief guide to Pelvic Floor Exercise

## And how to use your PelvicToner™ Progressive Resistance Vaginal Trainer

The benefits of well-toned pelvic floor muscles are enormous but identifying and squeezing the correct muscles is not easy. This guide explains how to achieve an effective exercise regime.

A healthy pelvic floor is crucial at all stages of your life. By exercising your pelvic floor you will help to strengthen the muscles that support the vagina, urethra, bladder, uterus and rectum. In turn this could dramatically alleviate urinary incontinence, support child-birth, discourage pelvic disease and menstrual problems, and improve your sexual enjoyment and responsiveness.

A third of new mums, and half of all women generally, will suffer urinary continence problems, but in the majority of cases these problems can be prevented or alleviated with well-toned pelvic floor muscles.

Your pelvic floor (pubococcygeal or PC) muscles consist of deep and superficial muscle layers slung like a hammock between your pelvis and the coccyx at the base of your spine. They support all of your internal organs and give you the ability to squeeze your vagina and control your bowel and bladder functions.

## 70-80% cure or improvement rate of suitable cases<sup>1</sup>

The value of pelvic floor exercises as a primary treatment for incontinence has been consistently demonstrated since Kegel published his work<sup>2</sup> in 1948. His observations, based on 15 years of experience of teaching pelvic floor exercises in the post-partum period, are just as valid today.

Indeed, research<sup>3</sup> in a randomised single blind trial confirmed that pelvic floor exercises were superior in efficacy when compared to other conservative treatment modalities. The rate of objective cure was significantly higher for pelvic floor exercises (44%) compared to electro-stimulation (28%) and vaginal cones (15%).

The PelvicToner™ is a unique patented device designed especially for use in conjunction with Kegel exercises.

In clinical trials<sup>4</sup> with the PelvicToner the average resting pelvic muscle tone improved by 9.6%, while mean Kegel tone (squeeze) increased by 28%. However in subjects with improved resting tone, the mean Kegel tone increase was 38%. Subjective data collected by surveys revealed overall improvement in sexual satisfaction and bladder function. 87% of subjects indicated that they would continue using the device on an ongoing basis.

With the recommended daily exercise routine you should quickly notice a tightening of your pelvic floor muscles. Many users report improved bladder control and vaginal sensitivity after just one or two weeks.

## Helpful Hints

To get the maximum benefit from your Kegel or pelvic floor exercises you should follow some simple rules:

- ensure that you are using the correct muscles (see over)
- use the maximum resistance possible
- exercise at least 3-4 times per week for at least 3-6 months and then maintain your muscle tone with exercises at least twice a week.

Exercising while watching television or whenever you think of it is not as effective as setting aside some dedicated quiet time. Without a set routine you may forget to perform the exercises altogether. Keep a calendar or diary note to remind you of each time you do your exercises. This will help you keep track of when you started and keep you motivated.

Just remember, it takes regular practice to get the best results. You will make your muscles stronger by increasing the number of repetitions and the resistance.

## Specifications

For your extra protection the PelvicToner is made from medical grade ABS plastic with an AMC/Sil anti-microbial additive. It is dishwasher safe. The springs are stainless steel and should not rust or corrode.

1. Royal College of Physicians (1995) *Incontinence: causes, management and provision of services*
2. Kegel: *Am J Obstet Gyneol* 1948; 52:238-48
3. BØ, Talseth, Holme: *Br Med J* 1999; 318:487-93
4. Swor, Bowen-Swor, Harvey et al, *Sarasota Memorial Hospital FL* (2003)



CE The PelvicToner is registered as a Class 1 medical device (vaginal trainer) under the provisions of the Medical Devices Directive 93/42/EEC.

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## How to use the PelvicToner

Read the instructions completely before use. The PelvicToner is not sterile on delivery and you should wash it in warm, soapy water before and after use.

Do **NOT** try to fully open or dismantle the PelvicToner and then close it again. This will apply unnecessary pressure to the hinge and result in breakage.

The PelvicToner is designed to open just enough to insert and remove the springs and is **specifically designed** to stay 'closed' so that the springs stay in place.

All women should find the use of the PelvicToner perfectly comfortable. The depth of penetration is between 6 and 10cm. The tip is just 3cm across and this represents the maximum 'stretch' that you will experience.

Over one-third of women start out squeezing the wrong muscles. You can check yourself by following these steps:

- When you need to pass urine, sit on the toilet with your legs apart. See if you can start and then stop the flow of urine without moving your legs.

- If you can stop the stream of urine, you are tightening the PC muscle. If you can start the stream of urine, you are relaxing the PC muscle, or:

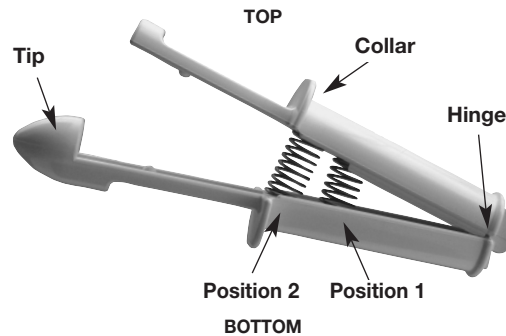
- Insert a finger into the vagina, and try to tighten the muscles around your finger as if holding back urine. When you feel pressure on your finger you are using the correct muscle.

The PelvicToner provides perfect feedback that you are using the correct muscles because it will only close when you squeeze the pelvic floor muscles.

Remember that the abdominal and thigh muscles should remain relaxed. Remember not to hold your breath and to breathe slowly and deeply.

Try to stay as relaxed as you possibly can. Once you have successfully located the correct muscles it is the technique of contracting and releasing them that actually forms the Kegel exercise.

The PelvicToner is a progressive resistance exercise device enabling you to increase the resistance as your muscle tone improves. In common with any exercise routine the PelvicToner combines repetitive movement with resistance. Typically, increasing the number of repetitions you do increases muscle tone and the blood flow to the muscle. Increasing the load builds muscle strength and definition. For most women the maximum benefit is derived by building to a high number of repetitions at a comfortable resistance.



It is recommended that you start with the least amount of tension until you have mastered the squeezing technique so just insert a spring into Position 1.

First make sure you lubricate the vaginal area and the PelvicToner from the tip to the collar. Only use a water-soluble lubricant gel. Lie down on your back with your head resting on at least one pillow, relax and bend your knees keeping your feet flat about 50cm apart.

Position the PelvicToner with the 'tip' adjacent to the vagina and towards the floor. The PC is one single muscle group but you will work to maximum effect by opening and closing your PelvicToner vertically, in an up and down motion – not horizontally.

Hold the PelvicToner closed and insert the tip into your vaginal opening until your vaginal muscles close comfortably around the flattened area. The collar prevents over-insertion. When you release your grip the PelvicToner must open by at least 1cm. If necessary add a second or stronger spring so that a squeeze movement becomes possible. You are now ready to begin.

Start with 3 sets of 30 repetitions (reps) or a total of 90 reps or 90 closings. Work up to 6 sets of 30 reps or a total of 180 reps or 180 closings with a rest of 15 seconds in between sets. You can increase the benefit by occasionally holding the squeeze for ten or twenty seconds.

When you have completed your exercise routine simply remove your PelvicToner. Do not try to force it out. Hold the PelvicToner closed with your hand and take several deep breaths until your vaginal muscles relax. Then gently remove the PelvicToner.

Try to complete your routine every day, but not less than three times a week.

## Maximise your workout

When squeezing one spring feels easy you can begin to increase the resistance levels. The two spring positions and two strengths of spring mean that five levels of resistance (x -xxxxx) are possible.

There are two spring positions:

	1 – nearer hinge	2 – nearer tip	
Position	1	2	1+2
Standard springs	x	xx	xxx
Strong springs	xxx	xxxx	xxxxx

Don't overdo it. Avoid straining. Take your time. The benefits are worth it.

## Frequently asked questions about the PelvicToner

### Can I tell if the exercise is working?

You will become more aware of your vaginal muscles and will be able to perform more squeezes with ease. This is the time to increase the resistance.

### Should I worry about soreness?

The PelvicToner may produce some soreness or a slightly uncomfortable feeling, but no more than exercising any other body part. If it hurts stop and allow the muscles to recuperate. Make sure that you are relaxed and well lubricated before you begin. This will help enormously.

### What happens if I stop the exercises?

If you do not exercise your pelvic floor muscles regularly they will soon become slack and deteriorate to the point where you may experience stress incontinence and lose vaginal muscle control.

### Who should not use the PelvicToner?

Many midwives advise that pelvic floor exercises should not be carried out during pregnancy. Do not use the PelvicToner if you are, or may be, pregnant or are post partum. For most women this means waiting 8-12 weeks after birth, and until any episiotomy has healed, before commencing toning exercises. Women who are postpartum, prone to genito-urinary tract infections or who have had prior genito-urinary tract surgery should consult their physician prior to using the product.

### How do I clean my PelvicToner?

Only use a water-soluble lubricant gel. Never use Vaseline or an oil-based product. Hand wash with soap and water before and after use or use your dishwasher.