

Protecting Your Pelvic Floor After a Hysterectomy

What Women Should Know



Hysterectomy & The Pelvic Floor

If you've had a hysterectomy or are planning on having one, it's important to understand how the surgery can affect your pelvic floor.

Although there are several different types of hysterectomy, at its most basic, a hysterectomy is the surgical removal of the uterus.

Removing the uterus changes a woman's pelvic anatomy, which can lead to problems after hysterectomy, such as a prolapsed organ, or bladder leakage (known as urinary incontinence, or UI).

Read on to learn more.





Pelvic Floor Anatomy

The pelvic floor is a system of muscles, ligaments, and other tissues that stretch across the pelvis and support the bladder, bowel, uterus, and vagina.

During a hysterectomy, the surgeon must detach ligaments and other supportive structures from the uterus and pelvic wall and then reattach them to the remaining organs (such as the vagina).

This “rearrangement” of the pelvic organ anatomy, along with the newly vacant space in the pelvis, can leave remaining organs like the vagina, bladder, and rectum more vulnerable to slipping out of place; this is called a prolapse.

Types of Pelvic Organ Prolapse

Several types of prolapse are possible after hysterectomy, including:

- **Vaginal vault prolapse:** This is when the top portion of the vagina slips down into the lower section (the vaginal “vault,” or canal).
- **Cystocele:** This is when the supportive tissue between the bladder and vaginal wall becomes weakened, allowing the bladder to bulge into the vagina.
- **Rectocele:** This is when the tissue that separates the rectum from the vagina weakens, creating a bulge against the back wall of the vagina.
- **Enterocoele:** This is when the small intestine drops into the lower pelvic cavity and presses against the upper part of the vagina.

Only a fraction of women will develop these problems, and having a preexisting pelvic problem is the single greatest risk factor for prolapse after a hysterectomy. Yet, it’s still important to take steps to protect your pelvic floor after surgery.





Bladder Leakage After Hysterectomy

When a prolapsed organ, such as the vagina, presses against the bladder, it can cause you to leak urine when you laugh, cough, sneeze, or strain.

Or, sometimes the bladder itself drops from its normal position and presses on the urethra (cystocele), causing urine leaks.

Bladder leakage is technically called urinary incontinence (UI), and it's common after hysterectomy. It's also common in women, generally, affecting as many as one in every three women.

Strengthening Your Pelvic Floor with Kegels

Doctors and physiotherapists agree: Strong pelvic floor muscles are a woman's first line of defense against pelvic organ prolapse and stress urinary incontinence.

Having strong pelvic floor muscles is especially important after a hysterectomy because of the way the surgery changes the anatomy of your pelvic organs.

Kegel exercises (also known as pelvic floor exercises) are a proven way to strengthen the muscles of your pelvic floor.^{1,2,3}

Strong pelvic floor muscles may also help address vaginal pain after hysterectomy.





How to Do Kegels

If Kegel exercises are already part of your daily routine, congratulations! You've already taken an important step toward protecting your pelvic floor health.

For those who haven't incorporated Kegels yet, here's how to do them:

- 1. Identify the correct muscles** (you can do this by stopping urine flow midstream; if you're successful, you've identified the right muscles).
- 2. Squeeze and hold** for 5 seconds, then **release and relax** for 5 seconds.
- 3. Repeat this 10 times** per session, and do **3 sessions every day**.

The Advantages of Using a Kegel Trainer

Using a pelvic floor exerciser like PeriCoach can help you identify and squeeze the right muscles when you Kegel.

PeriCoach is a Kegel trainer that you insert vaginally and squeeze against. It's outfitted with sensors that send data to your smartphone via Bluetooth. You can view your progress in real-time on the PeriCoach app.

Most women don't perform Kegels correctly with written instructions alone, and this is where PeriCoach can really make a difference. PeriCoach *guides* you through pelvic floor exercise routines and lets you know if you're squeezing correctly!

Hear stories from real women about exercising with PeriCoach.





More Ways to Protect Your Pelvic Floor

Anything that puts excess strain on your pelvic floor muscles can weaken or damage them.

In addition to daily Kegels, doing the following things can help protect your pelvic floor:

- Getting constipation under control
- Addressing chronic cough
- Managing your weight
- Avoiding foods that cause bloating, constipation, and/or diarrhea
- Exercising regularly

ABOUT PERICOACH

The PeriCoach system is a vaginally-insertable pelvic floor biofeedback device designed to guide women through Kegel exercises. PeriCoach is outfitted with sensors that detect the contraction of your muscles as you squeeze against the device, and it pairs with your smartphone (via Bluetooth) so you can see your muscles working in real-time.

In just five minutes a day you can help strengthen your pelvic floor muscles and help reverse or eliminate the symptoms of prolapse, including bladder leakage. The PeriCoach system is FDA-cleared, which means it has met stringent product safety requirements and is safe to use.

[Learn more](#) about PeriCoach, and [hear stories](#) from real women about their experience using the PeriCoach system.

 PERICOACH®



SOURCES

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