

# Perinatal Pelvic Health Service (PPHS)

## Pelvic Floor Exercises

### What is the pelvic floor?

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles and ligaments, which support the bladder, uterus (womb) and bowel. The openings from these organs, the urethra (wee pipe) from the bladder, the vagina from the uterus and the anus (bum hole) from the bowel pass through the pelvic floor. The pelvic floor muscles attach to your pubic bone (the hard bone between your legs) at the front and the tailbone at the back and form the base of your pelvis.

### What do the pelvic floor muscles do?

Your pelvic floor muscles support your bladder, bowel, and womb. When the pelvic floor is strong, it supports your pelvic organs to prevent problems such as: incontinence (the involuntary loss of wee or poo), prolapse (lack of support) of the bladder, uterus and bowel. The pelvic floor muscles also help you to control bladder and bowel function, such as allowing you to 'hold on' until an appropriate time and place.

### What causes pelvic floor muscle weakness?

Some of the common causes of pelvic floor muscle weakness are: pregnancy, childbirth – particularly following delivery of a large baby or long pushing during delivery, being overweight, constipation (having to strain to empty your bowel), lots of heavy lifting, lots of coughing, changes in hormone levels around the menopause, and growing older.

### How do I strengthen my pelvic floor muscles?

We recommend that all women exercise their pelvic floor muscles everyday throughout life, to prevent weakness and improve strength. Exercising weak muscles regularly, over a period of time can strengthen them and make them work effectively again.

Doing pelvic floor exercises every day can:

- Help prevent leaks
- Improve recovery after birth
- Reduce the risk of prolapse

Imagine you are trying to stop yourself passing wind and then pull forward as though you are also trying to stop your flow of urine. This closes and draws up the back passage and vagina. By doing this, you should feel your pelvic floor muscles 'lift up' inside you and feel a definite 'let go' as the muscles relax.

- Hold for a few seconds then relax \*
- Repeat several times \*
- Follow by several short squeezes \*

We can teach you how to do these exercises properly

