



What's Up Down There?

**A Quickie Guide for Evaluating
And Strengthening Your Pelvic Floor Muscles**

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What IS Up Down There?

Amazingly, when it comes to the health of their pelvic floor muscles, many women have no idea what's going on down there. Get this:



- 50% of women who suffer from urinary incontinence, often because of weak pelvic muscles, never seek help.
- A high percentage of American women report lack of interest in sex or don't find sex pleasurable, yet most are unaware that poor pelvic floor health can lead to decreased sexual sensation.
- Even with written instructions, 50% of women can't do a Kegel (or pelvic floor contraction) correctly.

These statistics wouldn't hold water if women really understood pelvic floor health. Did you know that poor pelvic floor health can lead to three kinds of urinary incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, and less-than-pleasurable sex?

The good news is that getting up to speed about this important women's health issue doesn't require rocket science. In fact, this ebook is a quickie guide that will help you find out for yourself "what's up down there." Specifically, we'll teach you:

- two simple tests to help you evaluate the tone and fitness of your pelvic floor muscles
- a simple exercise to ensure that you do correct Kegels, or pelvic floor contractions, so that you can exercise your muscles "down there"

Sound good? Then let's get started. You may want to print out this ebook, and then wait until you have some privacy at home before trying out the tests and exercise offered here. Completing the tests and exercises in this ebook shouldn't take more than 30-45 minutes.

How Toned is Your Pelvic Floor? The Pee and Squeeze Tests

Depending on a number of factors, everything from genetics to whether you have given birth, your pelvic floor could range from ultra-toned to downright flabby! We've got two simple tests—the pee test and the squeeze test—to help you discover whether you are a pelvic-floor goddess or "as loose as a goose" down there.

Whether you have been doing Kegels for 20 years or you have never heard of Kegels, when it comes to the health of your pelvic floor, the first step is to assess the fitness of these muscles. This gives you a baseline against which you can compare your progress if you decide to include pelvic floor exercises into your daily routine.

#1 - The Pee Test

- Be sure that you have to urinate before taking this test.
- Seat yourself comfortably on the toilet.
- Start urinating and, after 1-2 seconds, attempt to completely stop the flow of urine

How easily were you able to stop the flow of urine? Were you able to stop the flow completely, or did you achieve more of a dribble? This gives you an initial idea of the strength of your pelvic floor muscles.

Then there's the squeeze test.

#2 - The Squeeze Test

- Get a handheld mirror to use during this test and wash your hands thoroughly.
- Undress from the waist down and seat yourself comfortably on a bed. Support your back with pillows so that you are in a semi-reclining position.
- Bend your knees and place your feet flat on the bed, keeping your knees about shoulder-width apart.
- Hold the mirror with your left hand and insert your right index finger into your vagina (you may use a tampon applicator instead of your finger for this exercise if you wish, but you may get less feedback from this exercise).
- Hold the mirror so that you can see both your vaginal and rectal openings.
- Watching your vaginal and rectal openings, squeeze and tighten your pelvic floor muscles around your right index finger. Notice whether the two openings moved closer together and be aware of the strength of the squeeze around the finger (a strong squeeze will actually pull your finger further into your vagina).

How did you do on the squeeze test? Could you feel the squeeze or was the sensation more of a flicker? This gives you a second way to evaluate your pelvic floor fitness.

How to Do a Correct Pelvic Floor Contraction (Kegel)

Now that you have an idea of the level of your pelvic floor fitness, the next step is to learn to do a correct pelvic floor contraction. Surprisingly, many women cannot locate and engage the correct muscles to do a pelvic floor contraction, especially if they have weak muscles down there to begin with.

Some of this has to do with the fact that we can't see our pelvic floor muscles the way we can see our outer muscles. For instance, if you flex your bicep, you can actually see your bicep muscle bunch up. This visual feedback tells you that you are engaging the right muscle.

With your pelvic floor muscles, you won't get much visual feedback to indicate whether you are engaging the right muscles. That's why we've designed the exercise below to give you non-visual feedback through your hands. In the exercise below you'll be placing your hands on various parts of your body to ensure that you are contracting your pelvic floor muscles while you keep the surrounding muscles relaxed.

In short, this exercise teaches you how to do a correct pelvic floor contraction, also called a Kegel. Many women do Kegels, but incorrectly, and so don't reap the benefits of these toning exercises. That's a waste of time and energy. Use this exercise to ensure that you are doing Kegels correctly before setting off on a serious Kegel kick!

Are you ready? Here are the instructions. Go ahead and try it!

- Lie face up on your bed or on the floor with your legs straight and relaxed.
- Place one hand under one buttock, slightly toward the outside edge, so that you can feel if your buttock muscle contracts.
- Place two fingertips of your other hand between your legs in the space between your vagina and your rectum (this area is called the perineum). With the fingertips of this hand you will be able to feel the pelvic floor muscles tighten as you contract them.
- Now contract your pelvic floor muscles, those "Figure 8" muscles that surround the vaginal and rectal openings. If you aren't sure how to do this, just imagine that you are in a crowded elevator and have gas. Contract your muscles just as you would to prevent passing gas in the elevator. These are your pelvic floor muscles. Ideally, as these muscles contract you should feel them pulling inward slightly.

- Be sure to keep your buttocks and inner thighs relaxed as you contract your pelvic floor muscles. You may need to move your hand from your buttocks to your inner thigh to be sure all your external muscles remain relaxed.

If you were able to contract your pelvic floor muscles without tightening your buttocks or inner thighs then you have just done a correct pelvic floor contraction. Congratulations!

Pelvic Floor Health: Putting it All Together

Now that you have figured out the level of your pelvic floor fitness, as well as learned to do a correct Kegel, you have the basics being aware of and strengthening your pelvic floor muscles. If you are “as loose as a goose” down there, you’ll want to do many Kegels. If your pelvic floor is as toned as a bodybuilder’s biceps, you can keep them in shape by doing maintenance Kegels.

There are several kinds of Kegel exercises, which we don’t have room to cover in this quickie guide, but at least you now know the level of fitness of your pelvic floor muscles, and what it feels like to engage them correctly.

But don’t worry ... we won’t leave you hanging. We post regularly to our blog. In addition, our new book *What’s Up Down There: A Woman’s Guide to Pelvic Health* will be published soon, and includes a complete at-home program for pelvic floor fitness. Since you’ve expressed an interest in pelvic floor health, we’ll let you know as soon as the book is available. In the meantime, check our blog to learn more about pelvic floor health, urinary incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, decreased sexual sensation, and other women’s health issues:

Wet Matters Blog: <http://www.wetmatters.com/Blog.htm>

Have a Question?

If you have a specific question about women’s pelvic health or any of the topics mentioned above, feel free to contact us via our website:

<http://www.wetmatters.com/contact-us.htm>