

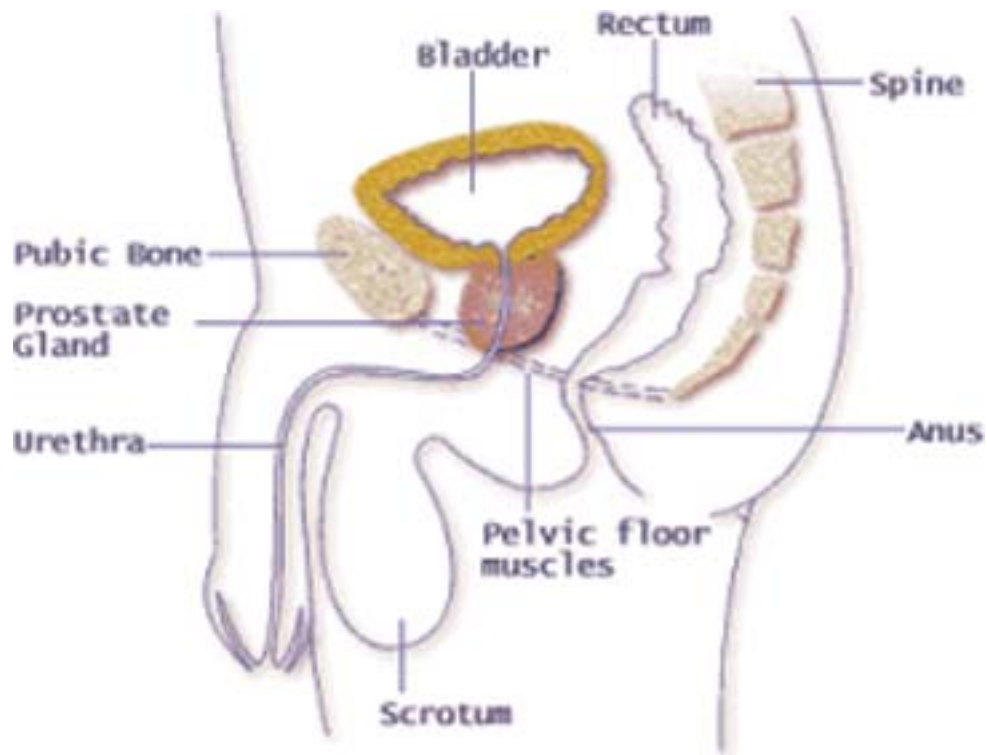
# **KEGEL EXERCISES FOR URINARY INCONTINENCE**

(The following information is based on the general experiences of many prostate cancer patients. Your experience may be different.)

## **What are Kegel Exercises?**

Kegel Exercises help strengthen your pelvic muscles. These muscles help control your urine flow. There are three pelvic muscles:

- 1) The bladder muscle. This muscle is shaped like a balloon and holds your urine.
- 1) The sphincter muscles. These muscles help you open and close your urethra, the tube that drains urine from your bladder. And,
- 2) The pelvic floor muscle (also known as the pubococcygeus or PC muscle).  
These muscles support your bladder and rectum and help control your urine flow.



### **Why should I do Kegel Exercises?**

The prostate is a gland, which is about the size of a walnut and is located under the bladder surrounding the upper part of the urethra. The urethra is a tube that carries urine and semen through the penis to the outside of the body. There are many muscles and nerves that surround the prostate gland. These muscles and nerves may be damaged during prostate cancer treatment. This may cause you to have urine leakage also known as incontinence. By doing Kegel Exercises, you are strengthening your pelvic muscles, which help you control your urine.

## **How do I find my pelvic muscles?**

There are several ways that you can find your pelvic muscles. One way is to:

1. As you urinate (pee), try to stop and start your urine stream 2 or 3 times.

Another way to find your pelvic muscles is to:

1. As you urinate (pee), imagine that someone walks in to your bathroom and you want to stop urinating (peeing).
2. Stop your urine flow.

The muscles you use to stop your urine flow are your pelvic muscles. These are the muscles you want to strengthen before and after your surgery.

## **How do I do Kegel Exercises?**

Now that you have located your pelvic muscles, you can exercise them even when you do not have to urinate (pee) by following these simple steps:

1. Tighten your pelvic muscles for 5 seconds (count 1 one thousand, 2 one thousand, 3 one thousand...). If you squeeze your the muscles in your anus (like you are holding a bowel movement) you will also be tightening your pelvic muscles.
2. Relax your pelvic muscles.

3. Repeat this exercise 10 to 20 times.

You have just done a Kegel Exercise. It is all right if you cannot repeat this exercise 10 to 20 times when you begin practicing these exercises. It is better to do fewer exercises that strengthen the muscle than to do more exercise that do not work the muscle in the right way. You can slowly increase the number of times you repeat the exercise until you reach 20.

When you do your Kegel Exercises, remember

- DO NOT hold your breath.
- DO NOT push down. Squeeze your muscles together and lift up.
- DO NOT tighten your stomach, buttocks, or thighs.

### **How often should I do the Kegel Exercises?**

It is good to do the Kegel exercises at least 3-4 times a day. You can do them before you get up in the morning, at lunchtime, at suppertime, and at bedtime. You can do them while you are watching TV or reading. Some men put notes on their refrigerator or on their bathroom mirror to remind them to do their Kegel Exercises. Some men's partners do the exercises with them. The more you do them, the stronger your pelvic muscles will become.

### **When should I do the Kegel Exercises?**

It is best to start doing the exercises before you have surgery. Start as soon as you know that you are going to have surgery. This will help you become better at doing the Kegel Exercises and strengthen your pelvic muscles before your treatment starts.

Do **NOT** do the Kegel Exercises while the catheter is in your penis.

Start doing the Kegel Exercises again according to the instructions above as soon as the catheter is taken out of your penis.

If you do experience urine leakage (incontinence) when you stand up, cough, sneeze, or laugh, try doing a Kegel Exercise right before any of these events to prevent yourself from leaking urine.

### **Will my urine leakage stop if I do the Kegel Exercises?**

Most men gain control of their urine leakage within 9 to 12 months after their surgery. Each man's healing time is different. Do not become discouraged. Talk to your doctor or nurse case manager about your concerns.

You will have some urine leakage (incontinence) after the urinary catheter is taken out of your bladder. You will probably need to use incontinence pads for a while. However, doing Kegel Exercises may help you control your urine sooner and may help you control urine leakage when you laugh, cough, sneeze, or stand.

If you have any questions about urine leakage or how to do a Kegel Exercise, please talk to your doctor or your Nurse Case Manager.

**Remember:** Kegel Exercises are something you can do to help get ready for and get better from your prostate cancer treatment.