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Has it been suggested to you to see a physical therapist
for pelvic floor dysfunction?

Annette Kornasiewicz

Stress Incontinence

STRESS INCONTINENCE

Please read this health disclaimer before applying any of the information on the website.

This website, the information contained herein, is for people who have been examined by their medical professional and have been diagnosed with pelvic floor dysfunction. This site is providing education and information about exercises; however it is not providing physical therapy. Regular exercise is not always without risk. You are responsible for your own health and safety at all times. As such, by visiting and using the information on this website you are agreeing to the following:

You acknowledge and agree that you have been assessed by a qualified professional (i.e. your doctor) who has given you consent to take part in pelvic floor health and has ruled out more serious conditions that warrant further testing.

These exercises should not be painful. Please stop and seek the advice of your medical professional if you suffer any kind of adverse reaction to the exercises proposed on this website.

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WELCOME VIDEO FOR STRESS INCONTINENCE

STRESS INCONTINENCE WORKSHOP

Have you ever been laughing so hard you have literally peed your pants?!?! It is wonderful to laugh like that, however, we really do not want to walk around wearing pads just in case something cracks us up...This workshop is for those people who lose urine because of a sudden STRESS, like a cough, laugh or sneeze. Some clients have even given up exercises that they love due to embarrassing leakage or dribbling. This class will show you a powerful program to target this kind of condition and to give up STRESS once and for all!!

Hello, it's Annette again and welcome to the STRESS INCONTINENCE WORKSHOP!! I am so glad you are here!! This lecture is in PDF form, and I will go over it all in the videos, but not word for word – this PDF can be printed out at the end of the lecture if you would like to refresh your memory about the information I have provided in the lecture.

We will start our class by introducing you to the PELVIC FLOOR AND HOW TO PERFORM A POWERFUL KEGEL. Once you have this technique down, we will show you how to condition and exercise your pelvic floor to SPECIFICALLY TARGET your problem area. Let's start with a quick anatomy lesson:

VIDEO and pictures of pelvic floor anatomy

This may be an uncomfortable picture of our pelvic floor, but I wanted to illustrate to you that it is the only thing between our innards becoming our “out-arads.” Just think of the responsibility of this wonderfully powerful group, who work in concert together, to keep all those delicate functions up and in, suspended against gravity trying to pull everything down and out. Chances are you never thought about this perfect hammock of warriors until something went awry – either you started leaking a bit or you started having pain down there. The reason these muscles are so incredible is because of the delicate balance of two types of muscle (fast and slow twitch – I’ll get to that later) that are responding to what we want them to do (volitional) and what our brain and organs want them to do (autonomic).

HERE WE GO – WE ARE REALLY GOING TO DO THIS (Video of finding the pelvic floor)

Basically as you sit here in your chair or on an exercise ball, let’s feel the boundaries of this pelvic floor everyone is talking about. Arching your back, you can feel the anterior portion (pubic bone), having a rounded back or poor posture (don’t ever have poor posture by the way) some can feel their coccyx or tail bone, which is the posterior portion of the floor. To the left and right sides are those bony sits bones that you can feel if you rock to one side and the other.

Kegels are usually described as clenching your sphincter area, the one that you would use to stop and start your urine. Some may have suggested finding these muscles while urinating, as this would be an obvious cue to those who have trouble, however it is not recommended to perform Kegels in this way due to the interrupting of the complex physiological process of elimination. I have found it much more helpful for people to concentrate on contracting the anal sphincter. The reason for this is that those muscles surrounding that area are generally more powerful and have more sensory information in them. Remember every muscle down there works as a team, so as you think about your anal sphincter the whole floor Kegels.

(Video of PERFORMING A POWERFUL KEGEL)

So let’s try it. Here is a weird but effective visual. Let’s say I put a stack of 10 pennies on your chair before you sat down here for this class (and for some reason you have thin enough clothes on, or no clothes on, to do what I am going to ask next). Now try to pick up one penny with your anal sphincter, the one that you would pucker if you had to pass gas in a room with just you and me and I know it was not me. It’s important that you do not push the pelvic floor toward the actual floor – so never push out and down, even when performing a bowel movement. Remember, gravity is trying to pull everything down and out of you, and you would like to keep things up and in. You also want to act like no one can tell **that** you are actually doing this, so if you are contracting your glutes and are moving up and down – that is not a Kegel. Also, if you are holding your breath or contracting your abdomen at all, keep practicing. Just your sphincter should be contracting. Do this a few times to get the hang of it.

Now, the pelvic floor is made up of slow twitch fibers (think long distance running) AND fast

twitch fibers (think Usain Bolt). To work on those speedy muscles, let's use our penny analogy again (just imaginary pennies, please). Now try to pick up 6-10 pennies one at a time as quickly as possible. It may be hard to do this at first, as those quick fibers may have not been asked to partake in this pelvic floor game lately, but you will get better with practice! If I asked you to sprint across the yard, you may not move as fast as you have in the past, unless you are being chased by a knife wielding cheetah and you happen to be coming home from the meat store. Think of snapping your fingers- work up to doing it this fast. Try ten now.

Now, let's talk about how to target your specific issue!

STRESS LECTURE VIDEO

HOW TO STOP LEAKAGE WITH COUGH, LAUGH, SNEEZE, EXERCISE OR BOUNCING

This class is for people who struggle with a small or large amount of leakage with any kind of stress on the bladder, typically things that catch you by surprise like a cough, laugh or sneeze. Many people have some leakage during plyometric or bouncing exercises and have decided that they should just go back to walking, or stopping exercising altogether. Of course, you have tried Kegels without success. However, have you honestly ever tried a consistent, daily strengthening program of a certain type of Kegel for 8-12 weeks? Are you willing to try to get rid of this pesky problem once and for all?!?! Let's do it!!

Most people are told to do Kegels a few times per day at stop lights or during commercial breaks of their favorite show. I'll use the analogy that I tell all my clients – would you expect to get stronger in your biceps, strong enough to make a difference in your ability to lift heavy items or improve the tone or look of your shoulders, if you had a one pound weight in the passenger seat of your car and you picked it up during stop lights and belted out a few?!?! I'm thinking this exercise program is not going to get you to a “which way to the beach” physique. But that is how we expect our occasional Kegels to tone and strengthen the only muscle group between your insides and the floor.

For stress incontinence or leakage, things seem insurmountable. The intra-abdominal pressure that is generated from a sudden cough, laugh and especially a sneeze is incredible. That, coupled with gravity already pulling organs south, it is a lot to ask the pelvic floor to keep it all in check. It's muscles vs liquids, people, and guess who wins out if there has been past trauma down there, especially deliveries that warranted one of the main anchors for all other muscles down there - the perineum – to be cut, or worse, torn (all of you should give a silent bow to the girls with THAT post-partum tale).

That is where this workshop comes in. I will teach you how to perform a Kegel on steroids, for sure, AND target the fast twitch muscle fibers needed to catch those sudden, quick stressors on your pelvic floor. SO, BETTER, STRONGER, FASTER is what I am talking about. Our muscles are made up of fibers that have different responsibilities. Some are set up to move quickly, some are in it for the long haul. Think of it this way. We have to develop our Arnold Schwarzenegger strength fibers AS WELL AS our Usain Bolt speedsters down there to beat this.

If you have read or practiced How to Perform a Powerful Kegel already, you know where your pelvic floor is and how to contract it. (Take a moment to watch the video or read the explanation NOW if you have not already done this). To develop your fast twitch fibers, the ones that are going to help with that leakage that occurs with cough, sneeze, bouncing exercises, we have to perform FAST KEGELS. So, let's imagine again that I have set up a stack of pennies on your chair and you sat on them (not a nice party trick, so please do not actually try this!!! The pennies are imaginary!!).

Below are instructions on the exercise sequencing and position that is right for you, stress incontinence sufferer. We will do a beginner's version in sitting that will be reviewed in the Generalized Strengthening Video below. Once you get fairly good with those in sitting, then you can perform these in standing. Some instructions before you start. While sitting on a chair with cushion or exercise ball, pick up with your anal sphincter 6-10 imaginary pennies one at a time as fast as you can (these are the fast Kegels we practiced in the video above). Try not to throw the pennies down so to speak, and do not bear down or hold your breath. These are called quick flicks and you should try to work up to feeling like you are doing them as quick as you would snap your fingers. This will work on those Usain Bolt muscle fibers that will eventually be fast enough to catch your sudden losses of urine due to stress. Please be patient with yourself. If you wanted to sprint a 50 meter dash, let's face it, most of us would be fairly slow at first, because we just don't run around quickly these days! But eventually, your pelvic floor will get faster, because you are training it to work faster.

When we will add our hips into the mix, as our legs are strong and fast and are wonderful helpers to overcome weaknesses in our pelvic floor. Think of a hammock between two trees. As your hips squeeze together or separate, the pelvic floor moves up and down – it has no choice. This way when you perform a contraction, it is like a KEGEL ON STEROIDS! BETTER, STRONGER, FASTER!! Once you are able to perform the sitting portion of this sequence without leakage, or you feel as if you are stronger and faster, you can move on to the standing portion. Again, none of these exercises should be painful!!

SITTING STRESS INCONTINENCE VIDEO – (THIS IS THE SAME SEQUENCING AS GENERAL PELVIC FLOOR STRENGTHENING IN SITTING BELOW)

DO THIS SEQUENCE DAILY – IT SHOULD TAKE YOU BETWEEN 7-10 MINUTES!

SITTING ON A BALL OR CHAIR WITH CUSHION, feet in neutral and knees about hip-width apart – try not to hold your breath.

1. Pick up with your anal sphincter 6-10 imaginary pennies one at a time as fast as you can. Try to contract your pelvic floor powerfully and quickly. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds, rest for 10 seconds.
2. Squeeze your knees together comfortably and perform 6-10 quick flicks. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds while squeezing your knees together, rest for 10 seconds.
3. Squeeze your knees apart comfortably and perform 6-10 quick flicks. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds while squeezing your knees together, rest for 10 seconds.
4. Pull your pelvic floor up and in (anal sphincter) AND HOLD while you bounce gently 10 times. Rest for 10

seconds.

Do this sequence, numbers 1-4 above, ten times (you may have to work up to this – do what you can)!

IF YOU ARE ABLE TO PERFORM THE ABOVE WITHOUT LEAKAGE, OR THESE ARE VERY EASY FOR YOU – TRY THE SEQUENCE IN STANDING

STANDING STRESS INCONTINENCE VIDEO

Now, let's try this sequence in standing!

1. While standing, feet hip's width apart, toes out slightly, perform 6-10 fast Kegels. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds, rest for 10 seconds.
2. While standing gently squeeze your knees together while performing 6-10 fast Kegels. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds while squeezing your knees together, rest for 10 seconds.
3. While standing, feel pressure in the balls of your feet as you imagine you are moving the front portion of your feet away from themselves (you should feel your bottom muscles kick in). Perform 6-10 fast Kegels in this position. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds, rest for 10 seconds.
4. Now, bounce gently in standing while holding your pelvic floor up and in. GENTLY is the key word here – please do not perform if you are experiencing any pain. Do 10 of these.

Do this sequence, numbers 1-4 above, ten times (you may have to work up to this – do what you can)!

ADVANCED STRESS RELIEF EXERCISES WITH BALANCE VIDEO

1. While standing, HOLDING ONTO SOMETHING IF NEEDED, place your feet heel to toe as if you are walking a tightrope, perform 6-10 fast Kegels while breathing in. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds while breathing out, rest for 10 seconds and breathe normally. Switch sides.
2. While standing, HOLDING ONTO SOMETHING IF NEEDED, place your feet heel to toe as if you are walking a tightrope squeeze your thigh to the other thigh, perform 6-10 fast Kegels while breathing in. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds while breathing out, rest for 10 seconds and breathe normally. Switch sides.
3. . While standing, HOLDING ONTO SOMETHING IF NEEDED, place your feet heel to toe as if you are walking a tightrope squeeze the balls of your feet into the floor (you will not be moving however you will feel the muscles of your bottom kick in – this should not be painful), perform 6-10 fast Kegels while breathing in. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds while breathing out, rest for 10 seconds and breathe normally. Switch sides
4. . While standing, HOLDING ONTO SOMETHING IF NEEDED, place your feet heel to toe as if you are

walking a tightrope squeeze your thigh to the other thigh, perform 6-10 quick adduction motions with your legs. You can attempt to perform your quick flicks at the same time, however this is difficult at first. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds while performing the quick adduction motions with your legs while breathing out, rest for 10 seconds and breathe normally. Switch sides

GENTLE is the key word here – please do not perform if you are experiencing any pain. .

Do this sequence, numbers 1-4 above, ten times (you may have to work up to this – do what you can)!

It will take some time for you to get better, stronger and especially quicker, however I would imagine you are getting the picture – to combat difficulties with quick actions like a cough, laugh or sneeze – we need to practice and develop those muscles that are responsible for the fast stuff. Please be patient and give this some time – you will notice the improvements soon!

JUST THE TIPS VIDEO

SOME GENERAL TIPS BEFORE YOU START AND WHILE YOU GO THROUGH THIS PROGRAM:

1. I recommend that clients wear some protection, i.e. some form of adult undergarment to help with the confidence factor when starting this technique. This is especially true if you do have some trouble with occasional incontinence. If your bladder “knows” it is secure, it will behave better and you will have some time to develop the skill. You must have full confidence in the process. Your brain and central nervous system have to be on board as well as your muscles.
2. Please DO keep track of your voiding habits for a three day period (see handout example **BLADDER TRACKER KEEPER** at the end of this workshop). My recommendation is to track a few days of the week and one weekend, just because our behavior and habits may differ, especially if you are still working. Once you notice your patterns, you can work on a targeted but realistic schedule that is right for you. For example, if you note that you typically use the restroom every hour at work, maybe try to extend this out at 15 minute to ½ hour increments. Please do not ever sit or lie there in urge pain. My hope is that you are able to use the technique above to calm the feeling of having to urinate, and then that feeling goes away for a time. You may even be able to return to sleep without getting up!! This is a powerful habit loop breaker!
3. Instead of measuring the amount of urine you are voiding each time on your **BLADDER TRACKER KEEPER**, you can count your urine stream in seconds to get a good idea of what a full bladder “feels” like for you. I would recommend counting “one one thousand, two one thousand,” and so on, during your first void of the day. This typically is when our bladder is the most distended, so you can use that as your guide for both feeling and what a true full bladder feels like (or if you’re a beer drinker, how long does that first pee after you “break the seal.” My personal best is 26 seconds, but that was after a few). Also, this will help you find the “fake” trips to the restroom, when you felt you had to go but there was just a three-second trickle. This can help with stress incontinence because one aspect of this problem could be erratic and

inconsistent urination and BM trips or dehydration which makes it difficult for the bladder to perform at its best! (For complete instructions, please see the Bladder Tracker Keeper video and PDF below).

4. Once you are noticing your success, it is important that you do not “mess” with your bladder in other areas. For example, waiting 4-5 hours to use the restroom at work (nurses and doctors, I’m talking to you) then wondering why your system is cranky is on you. Conversely, using the restroom when you do not have to go starts to signal the bladder to contract at a lower and lower volume. **TRY NOT TO GO TO THE RESTROOM JUST IN CASE YOU NEED TO.** Recognize the natural signals from your body. Try to drink enough fluids that you are voiding every 2-3 hours or so.

5. Have a little fun with this – some of my clients have had a “Me vs Bladder” win ticker when they first start out. Sometimes they “win” and are able to cough, laugh, sneeze or bounce without leakage, and sometimes the bladder wins. You will get better and better at it, and a light-hearted approach always helps to improve your overall physical and mental status.

6. Occasionally, the urethra will have a little bit of urine still in the pipe or the bladder feels as if it has not fully emptied. This is called a Post Void Residual and may be complicit in that feeling of urge or even a little dribbling after you go. My recommendation is to, after your initial voiding, stand up (if you are normally sitting) or sit down (if you normally are standing) to retill the bladder. Do this a few times and try again (never push out). One could also while standing bend your body at with waist forward and backward a few times. Think of it this way: if a pen had a bubble of water in it, to coax the water out you would gently rock the pen back and forth. This can help the post void to mechanically drip out without straining.

VIDEO FOR TIPS TO MAINTAIN GOOD BOWEL BLADDER HEALTH

General Tips to Maintain Good Bladder/Bowel Health

Take your time when emptying your bladder/bowel. Make sure you empty your bladder completely each time. Do not rush the process! And please don’t ever strain – JUST CHILL!

Do not avoid going to the bathroom for long periods of time. Ignoring the urge for more than 4-5 hours between daytime voids may be convenient but not healthy for your bladder.

Avoid going “just in case,” or more often than every 2 hours. It is usually not necessary to go when you feel the first urge. Try to go only when your bladder is full. Retrain your bladder to perform on a schedule.

Maintain a good fluid intake. Try to drink 4-8 8oz glasses of water per day unless otherwise advised by your doctor.

Limit the amount of caffeine, citrus foods and alcohol you consume (see “Common Bladder Irritants” below)

Avoid constipation. Never strain when defecating. Let things come out naturally. If you try to push everything SOUTH when you are going and the rest of the time you want things to stay NORTH, well, gravity is going to win eventually.

COMMON BLADDER IRRITANTS

The things we eat and drink affect our bladder and its “behavior.” Common irritants include caffeine, alcohol (sorry), chocolate (sorry again), carbonated beverages, cranberry juice and citrus fruits and juices, tomato products, processed foods, artificial sweeteners and spicy foods. There are also some studies that suggest that quitting smoking, in addition to all the other reasons why one should, stopped stress incontinence symptoms almost entirely.

I usually will not suggest a diet change to my clients (at the risk of being stabbed if I take away their morning coffee) unless we have tried the exercise programs or techniques above and have had limited success. There may be a dietary component that is irritating the bladder in some way, and perhaps trying to eliminate one item from the list would further their success.

BLADDER TRACKER KEEPER

Often times, it is helpful for people to track the food or liquids they consume and how often they had an urge or leakage episode. Please click on the BLADDER TRACKER KEEPER below if this sounds like something you would like to log to see how you are doing in the coming weeks. The video will explain how to track your progress, and there is also a PDF version if you would rather read it. This is such an effective tool! Please give it a try.

[BLADDER TRACKER KEEPER VIDEO](#)

[BLADDER TRACKER KEEPER PDF](#)

[BLADDER TRACKER KEEPER](#)

GENERAL STRENGTHENING FOR THE PELVIC FLOOR

For an easy strengthening program for your pelvic floor, please see the GENERAL STRENGTHENING FOR THE PELVIC FLOOR video below. This same exercise sequence was reviewed above during the sitting STRESS exercise lecture. If you are having trouble with the exercise program or quick Kegels in sitting, try the VIDEO FOR GENERAL STRENGTHENING LYING DOWN for a few weeks to get BETTER, STRONGER, FASTER to beat your pelvic floor dysfunction issue before you progress to sitting or standing!

[VIDEO FOR GENERAL STRENGTHENING FOR THE PELVIC FLOOR IN SITTING](#)

DO THIS SEQUENCE DAILY – IT SHOULD TAKE YOU BETWEEN 7-10 MINUTES!

SITTING ON A BALL OR CHAIR WITH CUSHION, feet in neutral and knees about hip-width apart – try not to hold your breath.

1. Pick up with your anal sphincter 6-10 imaginary pennies one at a time as fast as you can. Try to contract your pelvic floor powerfully and quickly. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds, rest for 10 seconds.
2. Squeeze your knees together comfortably and perform 6-10 quick flicks. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds while squeezing your knees together, rest for 10 seconds.
3. Squeeze your knees apart comfortably and perform 6-10 quick flicks. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds while squeezing your knees together, rest for 10 seconds.
4. Pull your pelvic floor up and in (anal sphincter) AND HOLD while you bounce gently 10 times. Rest for 10 seconds.

Do this sequence, numbers 1-4 above, FIVE TIMES WORKING UP TO TEN times DAILY (you may have to work up to this – do what you can)!

VIDEO FOR GENERAL STRENGTHENING LYING DOWN

DO THIS SEQUENCE DAILY – IT SHOULD TAKE YOU BETWEEN 7-10 MINUTES!

LYING DOWN (THIS DOES NOT HAVE TO BE DONE ON THE FLOOR – YOUR BED IS FINE) WITH YOUR HIPS RAISED ABOVE YOUR CHEST WITH PILLOWS OR A WEDGE, feet in neutral and knees about hip-width apart – try not to hold your breath.

1. Pick up with your anal sphincter 6-10 imaginary pennies one at a time as fast as you can. Try to contract your pelvic floor powerfully and quickly. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds, rest for 10 seconds.
2. Squeeze your knees together comfortably and perform 6-10 quick flicks. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds while squeezing your knees together, rest for 10 seconds.
3. Squeeze your knees apart comfortably and perform 6-10 quick flicks. Now hold your pelvic floor up and in for 10 seconds while squeezing your knees together, rest for 10 seconds.

Do this sequence, numbers 1-3 above, FIVE TIMES WORKING UP TO TEN times DAILY (you may have to work up to this – do what you can)!

I hope that this workshop has been helpful to you. Of course, visiting a qualified physical therapist who can guide you through your journey face to face is best. In my practice, I would place you on a biofeedback machine during your second visit to give you a visual on where your pelvic floor is, how strong or weak it may be and how to perform that powerful Kegel. A typical patient may find success after the first week or it may take three months. If you are still struggling with these concepts or develop pain or

an adverse reaction to the exercises **STOP IMMEDIATELY** and please seek professional guidance.

Thank you so much for listening! I hope you are excited to begin your journey to **PERFECT PELVIC FLOOR HEALTH!**

Annette Kornasiewicz, PT, MDT