

Ottawa General Hospital
COLON AND RECTAL SURGERY DEPARTMENT
PELVIC FLOOR LABORATORY

PERINEAL STRENGTHENING EXERCISES

The following are descriptions of two types of perineal strengthening exercises. When performed on a regular basis, these exercises may improve the overall strength of some of the muscles necessary for continence. Like any voluntary muscle (i.e. biceps), it may take a while to reach a specific level of strength, and once one stops exercising its strength may decline:

1) Anal Winks:

These exercises may be performed anywhere. For example, they may be performed any time you are driving, or watching television. These are opportune times, because they don't take time out of your busy day, and they are good reminders. Tighten your anal canal opening (external sphincter) as if you were refraining from expelling gas or urine. ***Hold as tight as you can for 20-30 seconds, relax for approximately 20 seconds, and repeat 20-30 times/day. This will take you roughly 15-20 minutes daily. If you are unable to squeeze for 20-30 seconds, you may try 5-10 second squeezes early on, but your main objective is to sustain a 30 second maximal squeeze.*** Ideally, these should be performed during the week, and you may take a break on the weekend.

In addition to the anal winks, you may squeeze your buttocks simultaneously. This may provide additional pelvic floor strength.

The overall goal is to improve your squeeze pressures, fatigue rate (ability to maintain squeeze pressures which will allow you to defer a bowel movement better. Long term, an increase in external sphincter bulk can improve your overall resting pressures (anal tone when you are walking around or sleeping). This will help those who have symptoms of seepage.

2) Pelvic Tilts or Gluteal Sets:

These should be performed while lying flat on your back. Bend your knees, and place the soles of your feet on the floor. For support of your lower back, place the back of your hands under the small of your back (lower back). Slowly pinch (squeeze) your buttocks together while slightly raising your pelvis towards the ceiling. ***hold for 20-30 seconds, then relax and repeat 20-30 times daily.*** The duration of squeeze and number of repetitions will vary. This exercise strengthens the pelvic floor and may be performed in addition to the anal winks above.