

10-step guide to putting your pelvic floor first

1. Avoid heavy lifting

Keep your weights within a manageable range. Never lift heavy weights that make you strain or hold your breath. Avoid lifting weights from ground level. Aim to lift from waist height instead.

2. Use your pelvic floor muscles

Activate your pelvic floor muscles prior to and during resistance exercises. The goal is for your pelvic floor to be working immediately before and as you lift/lower/push or pull any load.

3. Lift with good posture

Maintain the normal inward curve in your lower back during every lift/lower/push/pull exercise you do, regardless of whether you are sitting, standing or lying on your back.

4. Exhale with every effort

Never hold your breath or pull your tummy in strongly during an exercise. This increases the downward pressure on your pelvic floor. Breathe out with every effort, whether it is a lift, push or pull.

5. Choose supported positions

Your pelvic floor will be under less strain if you perform your resistance exercises sitting or lying down wherever possible. Sitting on a Swiss ball is an excellent option.

6. Keep your feet close together

You will find it easier to activate your pelvic floor muscles by keeping your feet close together. If you are performing a standing resistance exercise keep your feet no wider than hip width apart.

7. Strengthen gradually

Start using light resistance and pay attention to performing the exercise correctly to reduce your risk of injury. Gradually increase your resistance when you are confident of your technique.

8. Take care when fatigued or injured

Your pelvic floor and deep abdominal muscles may not work as effectively when you are tired, unwell or have lower back pain. This may make you more prone to symptoms and injury. Take a break and return to resistance training when you have recovered.

9. Rest between sets

Rest for a couple of minutes between each set of exercises you perform. This gives your muscles (including your pelvic floor muscles) time to recover before your next lift.

10. Avoid aggravating exercises and machines

Listen to your body when exercising. If your symptoms are worse with a specific exercise, modify it or leave it and perform another exercise to strengthen the same area instead.

Speak to an exercise or continence professional if you experience any pelvic floor problems when you exercise.
For further information ring 1800 33 00 66 or visit www.pelvicfloorfirst.org.au.