

Your pelvic floor: what to really expect when you're expecting

By Stephanie Taylor, Managing Director, [Kegel8](#)

Your pelvic floor isn't something you've probably thought about before. However, looking after your pelvic floor should be high up on your list, especially if you're trying to conceive, preparing for birth or have recently had a baby.

Simply put, your pelvic floor keeps organs like your bladder, bowel and uterus in the correct position. If you have a weak pelvic floor you could experience symptoms like bladder incontinence, prolapse or a loss of sensation during sex.

To help separate fact from fiction, women's health expert Stephanie Taylor of [Kegel8](#) has answered the internet's most commonly asked questions about pelvic health and pregnancy...

Can Kegel exercises help you get pregnant?

Scientifically, having a stronger pelvic floor does not increase your chances of getting pregnant but it can make having sex more pleasurable for both you and your partner.

When you're trying for a baby but it's taking longer than you expected, the chances are you may feel more stressed and under pressure. So, to give you the greatest chance of conceiving and actually enjoy having sex, strengthening your pelvic floor can be a god send.

What are the benefits of doing Kegel exercises while pregnant?

Your pelvic floor will be stretched to its limits during pregnancy as it supports additional weight and expands to accommodate your growing baby.

Pelvic floor exercises highly recommended during pregnancy. The increase of blood flow and muscle flexibility results in healthy, oxygen-rich tissue being produced. This is a huge benefit within pregnancy as it means labour can be much shorter and the recovery period much faster.

Toning the pelvic floor can also help lower the risk of bladder weakness, tearing and the need for an episiotomy or C-section.

What are the best and safest Kegel exercises during pregnancy?

If you're worried about introducing Kegel exercises into your routine while pregnant, don't be.

Avoid using electric pelvic floor toners while pregnant unless under medical guidance. However, manual pelvic floor exercises are completely safe and will help to keep your pelvic floor strong throughout your pregnancy.

It's best to alternate between fast and slow exercises, ideally for 5 minutes at least three times a day. Sit, stand or lie with your knees slightly apart and slowly tighten your pelvic floor muscles starting with your anus (as if

you are trying not to pass wind) then tighten around your vagina. Squeeze both areas and 'suck-up' your muscles as hard as you can. Hold for the count of five, then relax, repeat five times. Then try two seconds, then 10 seconds.

As your Kegel muscles become stronger increase the length of time you 'squeeze and lift'.

What happens to your pelvic floor after birth?

Being pregnant puts extreme pressure on your pelvic floor. This, along with the delivery, stretches the pelvic floor and can cause stress or faecal incontinence.

After birth, it's completely normal to leak small amounts of urine or not be able to hold your bladder for as long. It's also really common to lose intimate sensation during sex which can take time to return.

Some women experience tearing during labour or may need an episiotomy, which will result in stitches. If you find them painful, pelvic floor exercises can reduce the pressure on the cut and the surrounding area.

How soon after birth can I start Kegel exercises?

If you had a straightforward, non-complicated delivery, then you should resume pelvic floor exercises as soon as possible to re-tone, reduce swelling and speed up the healing process.

It's best to begin with gentle, short squeezes. You may find that it's more comfortable to lie down, putting the least amount of pressure on your pelvic floor muscles.

After your 6-week checkup you should be given the approval to begin using an electronic pelvic toner. At first, you may find it more comfortable to use the skin electrodes rather than a vaginal probe.

Oh, but a word of caution, be careful not to do too much too soon. If your pelvic floor feels heavy, slow down and if you feel pain at any point, stop and speak to your midwife.

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About Kegel8

Kegel8 is one of the UK's leading pelvic healthcare companies. Its range of electronic pelvic toners offer women and men the chance to regain control of their pelvic floor from the comfort of their own home and in their own time. For over 13 years, Kegel8 has been the top choice for men and women who suffer from pelvic problems. Owned and managed by Stephanie Taylor, the company employs 40 people and is based in Hull, East Yorkshire.

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