

# HOW DO I KEGEL?

## PRACTICING KEGELS

Breathe in and relax your pelvic floor. Breathe out or count out loud to 10 while you tighten as if holding in a bowel movement. Relax completely between each kegel. Practice 10-15 at a time, 1-2 sets per session, 1-2 times per day. A good goal is ~50 each day.

## BREATHING WHILE DOING KEGELS

- **DON'T** hold your breath! This pushes down on the pelvic floor, which is trying to lift up. That means your body is fighting itself, and makes kegels hard to do. It also can make you more likely to develop prolapse.
- **DO** breathe out when you kegel. When you breathe out (or speak), your pelvic floor automatically contracts, making the muscles stronger.
- **DO** relax between kegels! If you do not, your muscles can go into spasm. This stops you from getting stronger, and can also cause pain.

## YOU MAY HAVE BEEN TAUGHT TO "STOP THE STREAM OF URINE" IN ORDER TO DO A KEGEL. THIS IS **NOT** CORRECT! WHY?

- When you "tighten to stop the stream of urine," most women tighten the superficial pelvic floor muscles. These muscles pull away from the urethra, so cannot stop a leak!
- When you "tighten as if holding in a bowel movement," the deep pelvic floor muscles contract. These muscles close the urethra, and support the pelvic organs. Strengthening these muscles will reduce urinary leakage and protect against prolapse.
- Many women practice stopping their stream while they are peeing. Don't! The pelvic floor muscles have to relax when you urinate. If you regularly practice stopping your stream, the muscles learn to tighten when you urinate, making peeing difficult and increasing the risk of urinary tract infections.

## CAUTION

- *If you have difficulty emptying your bladder, pain with intercourse, pain with gynecological exams or pain with tampons, you should not do kegels. Contact your provider and go see a pelvic floor physical therapist for individualized training.*
- *If you are practicing and your symptoms are not getting better, or if you develop pain, STOP practicing kegels. Contact your provider and go see a pelvic floor physical therapist.*