

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST PELVIC ORGAN PROLAPSE?

The pelvic floor of a young, healthy woman tightens automatically before she coughs, sneezes, lifts and jumps. After childbirth, and as we age, the pelvic floor tends to lose this reflex. Without it, when a woman coughs, sneezes, lifts and jumps, the pelvic floor muscles get weak and overstretched because of downward pressure. This can result in problems like urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse. A woman can protect herself against these problems by practicing kegels, and learning to deliberately tighten her core before exertion.

HOW DO I KEGEL?

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. *Does this sound different than what you have practiced before? We recommend this technique for many reasons. If you have questions, ask your provider for more information about kegels.*

HOW DO I PREVENT PROLAPSE, OR KEEP MY PROLAPSE FROM GETTING WORSE?

- Kegel and hold BEFORE you cough, sneeze, laugh, clear your throat, or blow your nose
- Breathe out and kegel when you stand up from a chair
- What activities make your prolapse worse? Common problems are lifting, running and jumping. When you do these things, wear compression shorts or spanx to support the prolapse. Learn to tighten your pelvic floor and deep abdominals before you exert.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM FEELING MY PROLAPSE, TO BE MORE COMFORTABLE?

- When you feel the prolapse: bend over and touch your toes a few times, or lie down on your back with a big pillow under your hips (*picture 1*). This will allow gravity to push the prolapse back in place.
- Do not strain with bowel movements. Sit on the toilet with a stool under your feet and leaning forward (*picture 2*). When you pass your bowel movement, blow out gently and consistently.

