

Internal Aerobics

by Carolyn Blackman, RN, LCSW

Listen, athletes: Even a strong body can have weak pelvic muscles.

When you do sit-ups, or swim or walk or run, you may be helping digestion and bowel health, but you are not strengthening the muscles responsible for sexual health or for stopping urine leakage. Those muscles lie deep inside your pelvis, and they require a difficult set of exercises. They are called Kegels, and I'm going to tell you how to do them. First, throw out your "Kegel exerciser" you bought mail-order. That device strengthens thigh muscles which are not deep inside. Next, stop trying to stop the flow of urine when you urinate. That just makes you tense when you're supposed to relax which makes it more difficult to completely empty the bladder.

Never believe anyone who says they're easy to do and can be performed while you're whistling while you work. There are hundreds of little tiny muscles, all performing a symphony of intricate movements in a sophisticated interplay with the conscious and unconscious mind. They are easily disregulated and difficult to feel.

Too much tension results in prostatitis, chronic bladder infections, frequency and urgency and menstrual and vaginal pain. Too loose and you leak. So if you try this and it doesn't work, it doesn't mean it won't work for you. It means you probably need Biofeedback assistance.

Now, make time for this :a half hour in the morning and at night. Sit or lie down (most people find side-lying best at first). Let go of all the tension in your abdomen, buttocks and thighs. Tell them not to help out. Let your whole pelvis sag. Stay completely relaxed for 10 seconds. Then squeeze as if you're stopping urine and gas at the same time and hold for ten seconds. Repeat this cycle of resting and holding ten times. That's it!