

PELVIC HEALTH WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



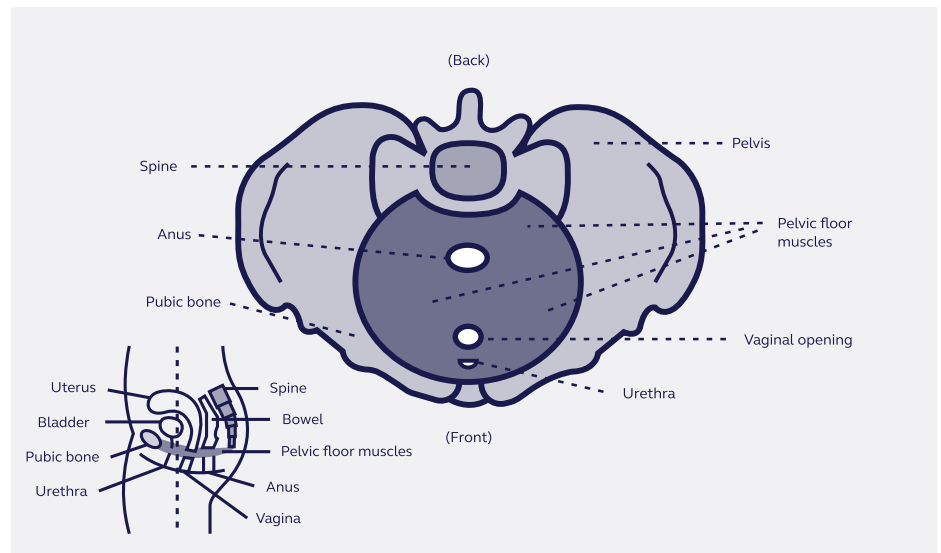
Pelvic health refers to the well-being of the pelvic floor muscles and associated organs such as the bladder, rectum, and uterus.

Understanding and addressing pelvic health is crucial for all women, including athletes, to enhance overall well-being and prevent performance issues in sports like rugby.

The pelvic floor is an important, but often overlooked muscle group for women.

WHAT IS THE PELVIC FLOOR?

The pelvic floor is made up of muscles and connective tissues that **support pelvic organs**, prevent bladder or bowel leakage, aid in bladder and bowel emptying, and support sexual function.



HOW POOR PELVIC HEALTH CAN AFFECT PERFORMANCE

Surprisingly, this dysfunction can affect women who've never been pregnant, including athletes playing contact sports like rugby, where up to **75%** may experience urine leakage.

These symptoms can **disrupt athletic performance**, leading to avoidance of certain activities and impacting self-esteem and confidence.

SIGNS OF PELVIC FLOOR DYSFUNCTION

Pelvic floor issues occur when these muscles **do not function correctly**.

If you experience **any one** of the symptoms you should consider seeking support and treatment from a health professional such as a pelvic health physiotherapist.

POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS

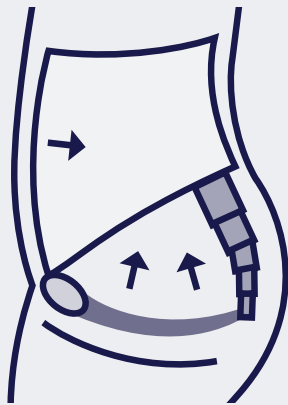
- Experience urine leakage when you cough, sneeze or exercise.
- Have pain in the lower abdomen or genital region.
- See/feel a bulge or something falling out of your vaginal area? (pelvic organ prolapse).
- A strong sensation or need to urinate regularly or waking up at least once in the night to urinate.
- Have loose stool or gas beyond your control?

HOW TO ACHIEVE GOOD PELVIC HEALTH

Even if you don't have symptoms of pelvic floor dysfunction, knowing how to **maintain pelvic floor strength** is vital to handle the demands of rugby.

HOW TO TRAIN THE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES


Training the pelvic floor muscles is **essential**, as they can become weak, too tight, or lack endurance or reaction speed.




HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

1. Imagine stopping the flow of urine and passing of gas.
2. While contracting these muscles think of pulling your belly button towards your spine.

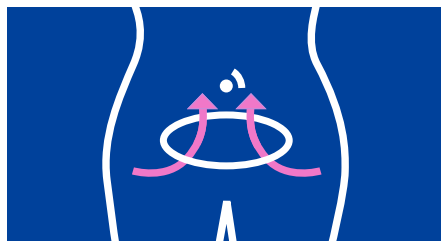
WHAT CAN I DO?

 To promote good pelvic health: talk with your **trusted medical provider** or someone you feel comfortable with.

 If you experience any symptoms **seek medical guidance** from a health professional such as a pelvic health physiotherapist.

 Develop healthy bladder habits by:

- Not rushing to the toilet **“just in case”**.
- Gradually increasing the time between bathroom visits.
- Do not **restrict** fluid intake.



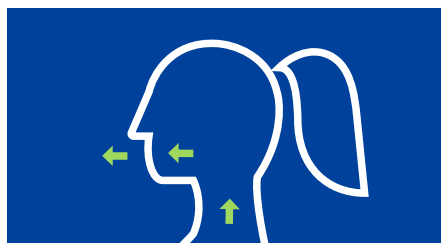
FINDING THE PELVIC FLOOR

Different **cues** can help target these muscles, such as imagining stopping gas from escaping, or the feeling of stopping the flow of urine. The contractions you feel when performing these activities are what you are looking to **replicate** with these exercises.



TRAINING

Pelvic floor training can involve various exercises to **improve function**. One exercise you can try involves squeezing your pelvic muscles while sitting comfortably, repeating this action **10-15 times**. As you progress hold each squeeze for a few sections.



THINGS TO AVOID

Be careful **not to overdo** the exercises and always rest in between. Clenching surrounding muscles or holding your breath during training should also **be avoided**.



DURATION OF TRAINING

Training **3-4 times a week** should strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. **After a few months**, you should start to notice results. It's important to **keep doing** the exercises, even when you notice that they are starting to work.



Find out more at world.rugby/womens-health



PLAYER WELFARE RESOURCE | PELVIC HEALTH

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