

# Get the most from your SoLá Therapy

## PELVIC MUSCLE RELAXATION 101

### WHAT ARE PELVIC MUSCLES?

Your pelvic floor muscles are a group of muscles located at the base of the pelvis (the lower part of the trunk of the body between the thighs and the abdomen). They attach to the tailbone, reach out toward the hips, and extend to the front of the pelvis near the pubic bone.

In addition to supporting the bladder, pelvic floor muscles also support:

- Urethra (a duct that allows urine to move out of the body)
- Vagina
- Rectum



### HARD TO FEEL

As young children, we typically first learn how to control our pelvic floor muscles during toilet training. Unlike abdominal muscles, pelvic muscles are not easy for us to feel. For people with chronic pelvic pain (CPP), it is important to try to develop a conscious awareness of the pelvic muscles.

### TIGHTNESS=TROUBLE

Pelvic floor muscles can become very painful if they are tightened for a period of time.

Pelvic muscles can often tighten as a result of:

- Stress
- Difficult vaginal birth delivery
- Gynecologic or other pelvic surgery
- Hemorrhoid surgery
- Straddle injury to the groin (example: falling onto a bicycle cross bar)



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### OTHER PROBLEMS

Many people who cannot relax their pelvic muscles report a history of other chronic problems, such as:



- Urinary frequency (urinating too often)
- Urinary urgency (sudden, compelling urges to urinate)
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Chronic constipation



In women, another common symptom associated with pelvic muscle tightness is a burning discomfort at the opening of the vagina. This is often misdiagnosed—and mistreated—as a chronic yeast infection.

### TIGHTNESS OVER TIME

Pelvic muscle contraction can become a subconscious habit, causing symptoms on a continual basis. Relaxation exercises and mindfulness meditation can help.

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### RELAXATION EXERCISES CAN HELP

There are some simple exercises (called relaxation therapy) that can help you learn how to keep your muscles relaxed. These exercises, demonstrated in your free SoLá Therapy mobile app, will help you develop awareness of both muscle tension and muscle relaxation. This will help you re-establish normal pelvic muscle function and reduce pelvic pain. A simple exercise is provided below to help you get started.



#### Before you begin:

- ✓ Pick a quiet place where you can concentrate on your relaxation therapy without any noise or interruptions.
- ✓ Take warm baths to help aid your relaxation efforts, lying on your back in the bath with your knees up.
- ✓ Enjoy quiet, relaxed reading instead of watching television, which can be overstimulating.
- ✓ Try to get 8 to 9 hours of good sleep every night and take naps (if possible) during the day. Most people relax their pelvic muscles while sleeping. If necessary, your physician may give you medication to help you get a good, relaxed sleep (but only if your body needs it).
- ✓ Avoid wearing tight clothing, use of tampons, and sitting for more than 15 minutes at a time (particularly sitting on a hard seat or riding in a car for a long distance).

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### Step 1

Place your hand in the vaginal area, with your middle finger resting on the surface of the skin between your vagina and your rectum. This is the easiest place to feel these muscles in action. Developing a mental awareness of the degree of muscle tension—and the ability to relax these muscles—are key to helping you successfully conquer your problem.

### Step 2

In order to feel your pelvic muscles relax, pretend that you are relaxing your muscles to allow the passage of gas. There should be an obvious descent, or relaxation, that you will feel with your finger and become increasingly aware of.

### Remember!

*It is important that you do not bear down or strain to make your pelvic floor muscles descend. Simply allow them to relax on their own.*

### Step 3

Squeeze your muscles (known as a Kegel squeeze), which is the opposite of relaxation. As you squeeze, you should feel the area between your vagina and your rectum elevating, or pulling up inside you.

### Remember!

*Your emphasis should not be on improving your ability to squeeze your pelvic muscles, but rather your ability to relax your muscles. Only squeeze long enough to become aware of the muscle tension, then quickly and completely relax the muscles.*

### Step 4

Close your eyes, and imagine yourself walking down three steps. As you take each step:

1. Squeeze your pelvic muscles once on the first step.
2. Relax them three times on the second step.
3. On the third step, squeeze again and relax three more times.

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### THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Your goal is to keep your muscles relaxed at all times during your daily activities. Throughout the day bring your awareness to your pelvic floor muscles. Often you will find they are tense without even realizing it. Consciously try to relax them when you notice them tightening.



### PRACTICE BRINGS RESULTS

During the first few days, you may only be able to keep your pelvic muscles relaxed while lying down. With practice, you should be able to keep your muscles relaxed while standing and/or sitting. In the beginning, you may want to sit on a pillow to reduce pressure against your buttocks, but never use a rubber ring.

### *Stretching Your Results*

*Special stretching and "foam rolling" techniques will help you maximize your pain reduction. Learn these routines in the SoLá Therapy Video Library*

*Click Here to Watch*

### *Break Free*

Call **844-557-7652** with any questions about SoLá Therapy.

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