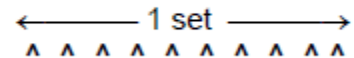


# Graduated Strength Training: A Pelvic Muscle Exercise Program

## Level 1: Flicks

**Goal:** Quick, gentle contractions (flicks); begin learning pelvic floor muscles contractions. Avoid bearing down, straining, or tensing your back. Avoid contracting abdominal, thigh, or buttock muscles.

**Prescription:** 10 short flicks/set; 5 sets/day  
Allow 30 seconds rest between each set

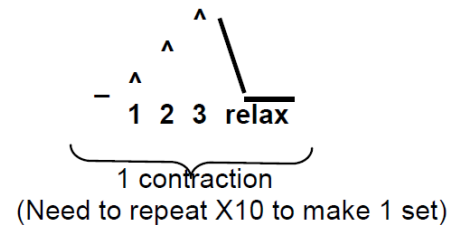


**Minimum Time:** ~5 minutes daily/5 days per week.

## Level 2: Stacking

**Goal:** Short, stepwise tugs to recruit the pelvic floor muscles more fully. Contraction performed as two or three progressively "higher" short flicks. Count "1, 2,3, relax" at each stepwise tensing.

**Prescription:** 10 contractions/set; 5 sets/day  
Allow 30 seconds rest between each set

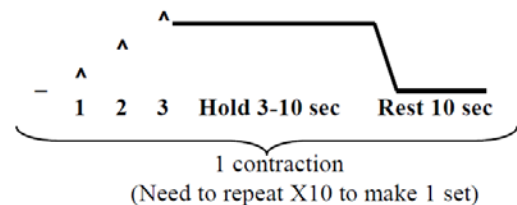


**Minimum Time:** ~5 minutes daily/5 days week

## Level 3: Endurance

**Goal:** Sustained moderate-intensity holds to begin increasing duration time. Perform as stacking, or alternatively smooth contractions. Direct the force inward and upward. Hold each contraction 3 seconds (work up to holding for 10 seconds). While holding, contract the muscle steadily and as hard as you can without straining.

**Prescription:** 10 contractions/set; 3 sets/day  
Hold each contraction 3-10 seconds  
Allow 10 seconds rest between contractions  
Allow 30 seconds rest between sets

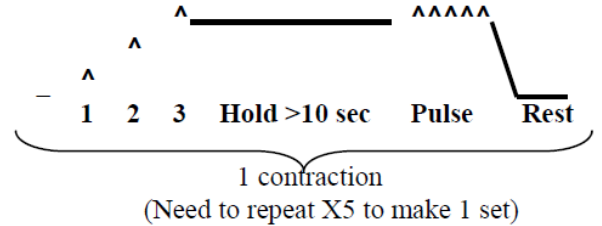


**Minimum Time:** ~10 minutes daily/5 days per week

#### **Level 4: High-Intensity**

**Goal:** Maximum, high-intensity contractions in order to increase muscle bulk and strength  
Sustain the contraction at high-intensity until fatigue  
Concentrate on maintaining the contraction without straining by pulsing to hold.

**Prescription:** 5 contractions/set; 3 sets/day  
Hold each contraction >10 seconds, pulse to sustain  
Allow 10 seconds rest between contractions  
Allow 30 seconds rest between sets



**Minimum Time:** ~10 minutes daily/5 days per week

#### **Level 5: Maintenance**

**Goal:** Continue active pelvic floor muscle contractions as an ongoing self-care practice.  
Concentrate on becoming aware of contracting the pelvic muscles before sneezing, coughing, lifting  
Maintain optimum strength through practicing Level 5 contractions regularly.

**Prescription:** 5 contractions/set; 2 sets/week or more as able to fit into your routine (daily exercise preferred)

Hold each contraction >10 seconds, pulse to sustain  
Allow 10 seconds rest between contractions  
Allow 30 seconds rest between sets

**\* Perform same as Level 4 contractions**

**Minimum Time:** ~5-10 minutes/week

Reproduced from Janis Miriam Miller, "On Pelvic Floor Muscle function and Stress Urinary Incontinence: Effects of Posture, Parity and Volitional Control", Dissertation, University of Michigan, pages 145-157". No changes in, additions to, or deletions from the text should be made without prior written approval of Janis Miller.

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