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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prescription:</th>
<th>10 short flicks/set; 5 sets/day Allow 30 seconds rest between each set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prescription:</th>
<th>10 contractions/set; 5 sets/day Allow 30 seconds rest between each set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prescription:</th>
<th>10 contractions/set; 3 sets/day Hold each contraction 3-10 seconds Allow 10 seconds rest between contractions Allow 30 seconds rest between sets</th>
</tr>
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</table>

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

**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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