

Avoiding Extra Abdominal Pressure

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Daily activities result in pressure changes in the pelvis. Bearing down with extra abdominal pressure can increase pelvic organ prolapse and urine leakage. Learning how to avoid extra abdominal pressure protects the pelvic organs and decreases symptoms.

Squeeze before you sneeze

Practice contracting your pelvic floor muscles immediately before sneezing, coughing, laughing, lifting, or straining. This will help to create the habit of squeezing the muscle at the correct time. Even if it does not stop leakage, practice now so that it will be successful when your muscle has the strength it needs. This practice should be done with anything that increases your symptoms.

Squeeze before you lift

Proper lifting technique is extremely important to decrease stress on the pelvic floor. Bulging the belly outward results in bulging of the pelvic floor. See Jelly Belly Abdominal exercises for more information.

- Stand with your feet apart and your weight evenly on both feet
- Contract your belly inward and your pelvic muscle upward providing a corset
- keep your back bowed in and bend at the hips - your physical therapist can show you the position
- Bend your knees as you lower your body
- Practice touching the floor and standing back up if you can or just lower down to touch the chair. Keep your muscle contracted during the entire movement.

Avoiding constipation

It is very important to avoid constipation and straining. It is not necessary to have a bowel movement every day and it is necessary to push some to empty but it is not a good idea to bear down hard and long to empty. It may be helpful to consult with your doctor or dietician to resolve constipation. Here are some simple ideas to try

- Avoid foods that may be constipating: apples, bananas, white rice, white bread, cheese
- Increase foods rich in fiber: unprocessed bran, whole wheat cereals, fresh fruits and vegetables, beans (baked, red kidney, butter)
- Eat a high fiber cereal at breakfast. Look for a cereal that has 8 to 10 grams of fiber per bowl.
- Warm liquids at breakfast can also encourage bowel movement.
- Increase total fluid intake - 6 to 8 eight ounce glasses per day
- General exercise such as walking, swimming, dancing can help keep the bowels moving.