



## Understanding your Pelvic Floor

Pelvic floor muscles form the base of the 'core' muscle group supporting the bladder, bowel, uterus and vagina (in women) and the prostate (in men). This muscle group acts like a hammock providing support so our internal abdominal and pelvic organs don't fall out. Overtime the pelvic floor muscles can be stretched or weakened resulting in pelvic floor dysfunction (PFD). Most common PFDs are urinary incontinence, fecal incontinence, and pelvic organ prolapse. Whilst PFDs are mostly common among older women, due to general ageing and menopause, other factors may contribute to the onset of PFD, like:

- Pregnancy and childbirth (vaginal or caesarean)
- Chronic constipation or related bowel dysfunction (IBS)
- Female athletes, weight training or high impact sports
- Weight gain and obesity
- Surgery, such as previous hysterectomy

1 in 3 women will experience pelvic floor dysfunction in her lifetime, with an estimated 37% of Australian women living with some degree of urinary incontinence

Many women still view symptoms of PFD as 'taboo' with many keeping quiet, plus many women view 'leakage' as 'normal' after pregnancy and childbirth, however **even a little leakage** shouldn't be ignored.

## Daily exercises to change your life!

Like many muscles in the body, pelvic floor muscles can be trained and strengthened with regular, targeted exercise. Pelvic floor exercises strengthen muscles and reduce risk of incontinence and prolapse. Even if you don't have symptoms, it's important to include pelvic floor exercises as part of your daily health and fitness routine to reduce your risk of problems developing in the future. Discuss your questions, concerns and symptoms with a health professional, such as your GP or a physiotherapist who specialises in pelvic floor health. [Click here](#) to find the physiotherapist for you in your area. Plus, check out online resources from [Continence Foundation of Australia](#) and [Jean Hailes – For Women's Health](#).

*'Nutrition Australia NSW is committed to breaking down the stigma attached to pelvic floor dysfunction and incontinence. Join us during Women's Health Week speaking with friends, family and your workplace to encourage the sharing of information, inspiring and motivating women to be at their very best.'*

**Cr Barbara Ward NANSW President**

