

Pelvic floor exercises

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Your sphincter muscles help control your bowel function and continue to play an important role after the Ileal Pouch-Anal Anastomosis (IPAA) surgery. The anorectal manometry test you take prior to surgery evaluates the strength and tone of this specialized muscle group. Like other muscles, sphincter muscles can be maintained through exercise. Pelvic floor exercises are specifically designed to increase the strength and tone of these muscles.

How?

- ❶ Squeeze your sphincter muscle, as if you were preventing passing gas or a bowel movement.
Note: do not clench your buttocks together; you want to isolate the muscle inside.
- ❷ Hold this position for as long as you can. If you only can hold it for a few seconds, then start with that. As your muscles become stronger, increase your time. Eventually you want to build your time up to at least ten seconds.
- ❸ Relax for at least ten seconds.
- ❹ Repeat 10 times in a row, which is considered one set. You want to complete at least four to six sets a day. You do not want to do all four sets at once or that will fatigue the muscle. It is better if you space the exercises throughout your day. Your goal will be to hold for ten seconds at a time, ten times in a row (one set) and complete four to six sets each day.

Where?

Pelvic floor exercises are done anytime, anywhere. You can sit, stand, or lie down. You do not need a private place, because people will not even be aware of you doing the exercises. You can be watching TV, reading the newspaper, driving, or working on the computer. The most difficult aspect of the exercises is remembering to perform them. A tip to help you remember: associate exercising with something you do daily and on a regular basis. An example could be meals and at bedtime (that would give you 4 times, assuming you eat 3 meals a day). Another suggestion would be when you empty your pouch or when you urinate.

When?

It is very important that you start the pelvic floor exercises when your doctor tells you. This is usually about 4 weeks after the first surgery. Do not start them before!

Once you begin, you can continue indefinitely. The exercises will be most important while you have the ileostomy and for several months after the ileostomy closure. These exercises will help prepare for the first times after your surgery when your stool will be liquid and difficult to hold.. Before your ileostomy closure your physician may prescribe another anal manometry test, in which the technician can tell you how you are doing and give you tips on doing the exercises properly. If you have any questions please ask your ostomy/wound nurse or surgeon.