

K+ Training

As you may have guessed...”K” stands for Kegel and “+” stands for all of the strengthening, coordination, and other bodywork that is encompassed in K+ Training. Our exercises are designed to recruit the pelvic floor as part of the core support system, both automatically as you do the exercises correctly, and intentionally when Kegels are specifically cued.

Although “do your Kegels” is generally good advice, Kegels alone can be surprisingly ineffective for delivering on holistic fitness and continence goals. That’s why we combine them with other exercises and breath work. Plus, it’s more fun that way! Here, we’ll cover some basics about Kegels to make sure you get the most out of any K+ Training coaching and other programs you partake in.

If you’ve ever wondered “Am I doing it right?” “Am I supposed to feel something?”, then this is for you. Here’s a quick guide to cues that can help you do a proper Kegel.

What’s a Kegel again?

“Kegel” is the name for a pelvic floor muscle contraction. The pelvic floor is not just one muscle, but a bunch of muscles that create a “floor” for your core. They support your organs, maintain continence for bladder and bowel, support sexual function, and stabilize and support your posture and movement. Some of the muscles are circular (sphincters), and other muscles are long, running front to back like a hammock suspended between the pubic bones and tailbone.

When a person kegel, they contract the pelvic floor muscles. So the circular muscles close the openings of the vagina, urethra, and anus; and the long muscles shorten and lift (imagine the hammock drawing upwards), supporting the organs and tissues against downward pressure. When the muscles relax, they are able to stretch and open, like for sex, bowel movements, and giving birth. Think of the pelvic floor as a trampoline - it needs to be responsive, contracting and relaxing depending on the demands on your body. So the pelvic floor must be strong and mobile. Being able to contract well and relax well is equally important. And some people may need to focus more on relaxing than on strengthening!

(For more fun facts about the origin of the term “kegel”, check out the history of [Arnold Kegel on Wikipedia.](#))

How to Kegel

Common visualizations doing a Kegel include: the marble, claw, elevator, and sit bones. Each of these is described below. Go with the one that works best for you, and forget the rest. Keep it simple.

Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet firmly on the floor. Sit relaxed and supported (not slumped and not with over-corrected posture). If you find that Kegels are challenging for you, an easier position to practice in is lying on your back, with knees bent and feet flat on the surface on which you are lying.

Marble:

Imagine a marble in the vaginal entrance. To Kegel, imagine gripping this marble (close your vagina around it) and then draw it upwards into your body. Hold for 1 second, then relax and imagine letting the marble drop back down and out of the body. Repeat 10 times. Keep track of your sensations:

- Do you feel a distinct contraction and a distinct relaxation?
- Do you have a hard time contracting or relaxing?
- Are other muscles kicking in?
- Are you holding your breath?

Claw:

Imagine the pelvic floor as a claw, like in one of those arcade games where you try to grab a stuffed animal from the display case. To Kegel, the claw closes and then lifts upwards. To relax, the claw drops down and opens.

Elevator:

Imaging your vagina is an elevator, and the door is at the vaginal entrance. To Kegel, close the elevator door, then bring the elevator to the top floor. To relax, imagine the elevator dropping back down to the lobby and the door reopening.

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Sit Bones:

If you have trouble with imagery like the marble or claw, try visualizing the body parts. To kegel, pinch the sit bones in together; and to relax, spread the sit bones apart.

Other:

If you still have trouble with imagery, you can try to distinguish these muscles by doing what you'd do to stop the flow of urine. However, do not practice kegels on the toilet regularly, because this can lead to dysfunctional voiding.

The breath

After you have chosen the cue that works best for you, you can take it to the next level by syncing your Kegel with your breath. Start with a few slow breaths without any pelvic floor action. Just inhale and exhale slowly. Imagine the flow of air as you breathe - on each inhale, air enters and fills the belly ("inhale, inflate"). On each exhale, the belly flattens as the air leaves the body. When you're ready, Kegel on your next EXHALE. Relax on each inhale. Kegel on each exhale. (This may feel foreign for some. That's ok, just keep practicing.) Repeat 10 times. Keep track of your sensations again:

- Does syncing the pelvic floor with the breath help, or make it more challenging?
- Do you feel a distinct contraction and a distinct relaxation?
- Do you have a hard time contracting or relaxing?
- Are other muscles kicking in?
- Are you holding your breath?

Is a Kegel program right for me?

There are some people who may *not* benefit from routine Kegel exercises. (*By routine Kegel exercises, we mean a daily routine of isolated Kegel training; not K+ Circuit Training*). Sometimes pelvic floor issues relate to excessive muscle tension, and the treatment for this typically starts with relaxation and stretching techniques, with progression to a Kegel program if appropriate. Possible signs and symptoms of pelvic floor muscle tightness include:

- Painful sex
- Tailbone pain / pain during or after sitting
- Painful bladder or bowel voiding

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- Constipation
- A delay in starting the stream of urine
- A thin or spraying urine stream, or a start/stop stream
- Incomplete emptying of the bladder or bowels
- Pain using menstrual cups, discs, tampons and/or gynecology exam
- A diagnosis of interstitial cystitis, IBS, or endometriosis

If you have one or more of the above symptoms, a Kegel program is not recommended without guidance from a pelvic health physical therapist. An in-person evaluation can confirm the condition of your pelvic floor muscles and what type of pelvic floor programming is appropriate for you.

*** Disclaimer: This Kegel guide does not constitute medical evaluation, treatment, or advice. This serves as educational content only. Please consult with your medical provider(s) as needed, before partaking in changes to your fitness or health care practices.*