

# SmartHealth Performance

## Pelvic Floor and More – Essentials for Female Athletes.

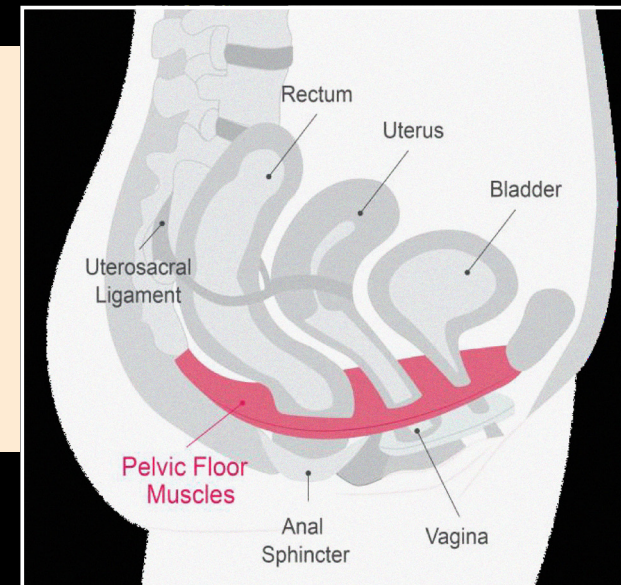
Developed by Niamh Clerkin and Rebecca Dodson



# SmartHealth Performance – Pelvic Floor Health

## The pelvic floor is:

- A layer of muscles stretching from the pubic bone at the front, to the tailbone at the back. They form the floor of the pelvis.
- When the pelvic floor muscles contract, they squeeze and tighten the openings of the bladder, bowel and vagina.



## The pelvic floor:

- Supports your core and spine.
- Supports the uterus, bowel and bladder.
- Controls bowel and bladder function.
- Works with your diaphragm to control abdominal pressures.
- Improves sexual function.



Scan the QR code to learn more about the pelvic floor.



Up to **50%** of women who exercise experience pelvic floor dysfunction.

This number reaches up to **80%** in high impact sports like netball.

## Urinary incontinence is the most common problem.

### What does that even mean?

- It means you leak urine when you exercise.
- It can happen particularly with high impact activities such as jumping and landing.

**Pelvic Floor Dysfunction (PFD) may occur if the pelvic floor muscles are not strong enough, may be too tight or have poor coordination or timing during activities.**

This can impact on urine leakage, ongoing hip and back injury, pain and ultimately performance.

# SmartHealth Performance – Pelvic Floor Health

## Pressure on the pelvic floor occurs in Netball from:

- **Jumping and landing** – as you land the abdominal pressure increases and pushes down to the pelvic floor.
- **Lifting weights in the gym** – as you brace and increase abdominal pressure to stabilise and lift, your pelvic floor is stressed.



## Do you experience...



## Who is at risk?

Other than high impact sports, there are other contributing factors:

- Previous hip or low back injury.
- Poor movement strategies – poor squatting, jumping and landing.
- Poor back, hip, core muscle strength and co-ordination.
- Posture deficits.
- Hyper-mobile joints.

## Increased risk also with:

- Pregnancy
- Childbirth
- Obesity
- Respiratory and neurological conditions.



# Tips for a Healthy Pelvic Floor

## TIP #1

### Do pelvic floor exercises.

Pelvic floor exercises are important at all stages of life.

Scan the QR code for a simple pelvic floor explanation and exercises.



## TIP #2

### Use 'The Knack'.

Breathe out and engage your pelvic floor muscles when you cough or sneeze or if you lift anything heavy.

Scan the QR code for Squeezy App and more information.



## TIP #3

### Do your rehab!

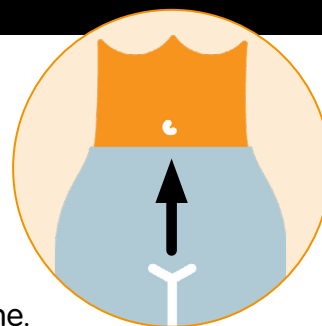
Address all other contributing factors:

- Hip strength
- Low back pain
- Movement skill (squat, jump, land)
- Posture



## Simple Pelvic Floor Exercise

- 1 Start In a comfortable sitting or standing position; relax your stomach and glutes.
- 2 Tighten, squeeze and lift your pelvic floor muscles as though you are holding in wind and stopping the flow of urine.
- 3 Hold for 1–2 seconds and build up to 10 seconds.
- 4 Relax your pelvic floor muscles – make sure you relax COMPLETELY.
- 5 Repeat 3 x 10 repetitions.



# The Pelvic Floor Supports your Bowel and Bladder

## A Happy Bowel:

### Bowel motions should be:

- Soft and well-formed and easy to pass
- Completely emptied each time

### Bowel motions should NOT be:

- Painful or blood-filled

## Tips:

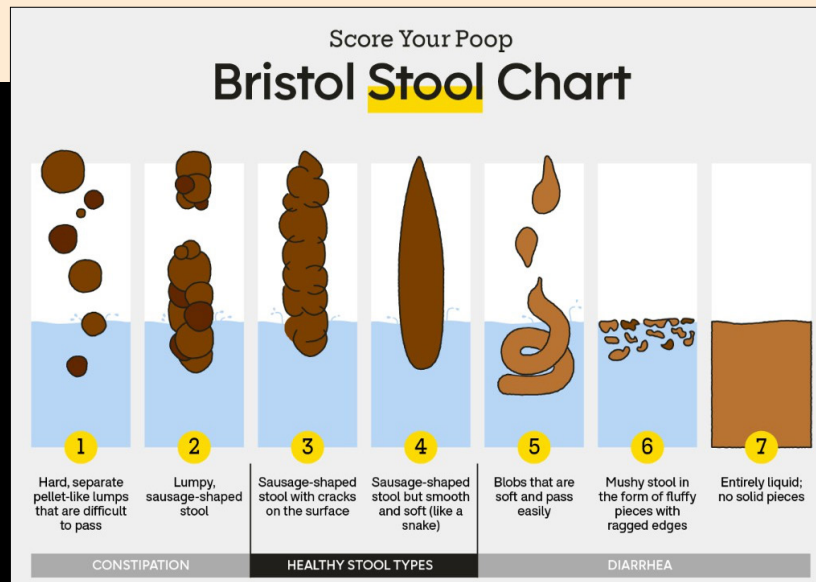
- Eat a healthy diet with plenty of fibre
- Make sure you are drinking enough fluid

## A Happy Bladder:

- Tells you when it is full but gives you enough time to get to a toilet.
- Needs to pass urine every 2–4 hours in the day and up to once at night.
- Completely empties each time.

## Tips:

- Drink enough fluid to keep your urine a pale yellow/straw colour. For most people this is around 6–8 cups per day, but remember it is more when you are an elite athlete.
- Avoid going to the toilet 'just in case'.
- Alcohol, caffeine, and fizzy drinks can irritate the bladder for some people – consider this if you have urgency or frequently need to pass urine.



Seek help from a qualified Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist for a full evaluation.

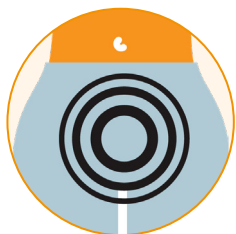


Talk to your club doctor, physio or trainer about your symptoms.

Continence NZ have useful Information.



# Key Messages for the Athlete



## The Pelvic Floor:

- Supports your core and spine and supports the uterus, bowel and bladder.
- Controls bowel and bladder function.
- Works with your diaphragm to control abdominal pressures.
- Improves Sexual Function.



## Stress on the Pelvic Floor:

- **Netball movements** places stress on the pelvic floor and **lifting weights** in the gym places stress on your pelvic floor.
- Like other parts of your body, it is important to exercise your pelvic floor to develop optimal strength and function.
- These exercises are simple and should be done regularly.
- Contract your pelvic floor when you sneeze or cough (the “Knack”).



## Bowel and Bladder Health:

- A happy bladder and a happy bowel contributes to a “happy” athlete.
- Hydration is important for many aspects of your training – including bladder health.
- A healthy diet supports performance on the court and of your bowels.
- If you have any concerns re your bladder or bowel health, please see a Dr or Specialist



## Concerns:

- If you are concerned about your pelvic floor, discuss with your club doctor, physio or trainer
- See these useful links (right) to help you, or contact:  
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Pelvic  
Floor  
Exercises



Squeezy  
App