FLUIDS
You need to drink 3-4 pints (1.5-2 litres) per day. Do not restrict your intake – it will lead to strong urine which irritates the bladder lining, and may make you want to go more frequently and with more urgency. Water is best. It is best to avoid caffeine, which is found in coffee, tea, cola and chocolate. Reduce caffeine gradually as you may suffer withdrawal symptoms.

TRY TO AVOID

• Being overweight – this gives the muscles extra work to do. Getting to your correct weight can make a considerable improvement to your symptoms.

• Constipation – straining to empty your bowels stretches the pelvic floor and may lead to prolapse. Check your diet, and drink plenty of water.

• Heavy lifting – this puts a strain on the pelvic floor. If you need to lift, tighten your pelvic floor muscles first and hold them in until you have lowered the load.

• Strong abdominal and high impact exercises eg straight leg sit-ups, or double leg lifts.

• Persistent coughing and sneezing – try to deal with the cause eg stop smoking, treat hay fever/asthma. Remember to

REMEMBER

FREQUENCY OF BLADDER EMPTYING
Avoid emptying your bladder too often as this can reduce its working capacity. You should not need to go more often than every two hours, and don’t wait much longer than four hours.

Try to empty your bladder completely, but do not strain. Sit down properly and do not “hover”. It may help to lean forwards, rock gently or stand up and sit down again once you think you have finished. Tighten up your pelvic floor once empty.

Clinic Telephone No ……………………………

You can receive help with queries about NHS services from Patient Advice and Liaison Service

Telephone: 0800 088 4449
Email: pals@nchc.nhs.uk

If you would like this leaflet in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 01603 697381.

Leaflet Produced Date: May 2010
Leaflet Review Date: May 2012

PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE EXERCISES

Advice for Patients

Looking after you locally
THE PELVIC FLOOR

The pelvic floor muscles form a broad sling running from the front to the back at the floor of the pelvis. They help to support the pelvic organs ie bladder, uterus and rectum, and control the outlets from them, ie urethra, vagina and anus. These muscles are weakened by pregnancy, childbirth and hormonal changes around the menopause. Weak muscles may lead to bladder and bowel leakage, prolapse and decreased satisfaction during intercourse.

PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE EXERCISES

These muscles work by closing and drawing up the back and front passages. Imagine you are trying to stop yourself passing wind and at the same time trying to stop your flow of urine mid-stream and closing the entrance to the vagina, drawing up inside with a "squeeze and lift", without tightening your buttocks, squeezing your legs together, or holding your breath.

YOUR EXERCISE PROGRAMME

- Tighten your pelvic floor muscles and hold them in while you breathe. How long can you hold this contraction? ..........seconds.
- Release and rest for ..........seconds.
- How many times can you repeat this contraction? .......... repetitions.
- How many strong quick squeezes can you do? .......... repetitions.

This is your “starting block” eg 4 second hold, 6 repetitions, with 5 strong, quick squeezes. This is your exercise programme, which you need to repeat ..........times per day as advised by your nurse/ physiotherapist. This will build up your strength and endurance, which will help the muscles to work better.

EXERCISE PROGRESSION

- Gradually progress by increasing the number of repetitions of both slow and fast contractions, then by increasing the length of hold.
- Try to relate exercise times to other daily activities to remind you eg each time you have a drink, or after you pass urine. Try to exercise in a variety of positions, ie lying, sitting and standing, and progress to do most in standing. With time you should also be able to do the squeezes during walking and other activities.
- Many women find it helpful to test their muscles when they are in the bath. Sit with knees bent and gently insert one or two fingers into the vagina to feel the muscles working as you practise the exercise.
- It can take 3-6 months to produce the required results, and exercises should be continued 1-2 times per day to maintain progress – try to make it a habit.