

# PELVIC HEALTH

## VIDEO GUIDE



### TAKE THE PELVIC FLOOR CHALLENGE!



Please share this with anyone who may benefit!

Featuring videos from experienced pelvic health physiotherapists **Liz Childs and Leanne Wait**

Also inside: downloadable resources, useful links, and easy-to-follow demonstrations to help you support your pelvic health.



**Emma's story**



**Strengthening your pelvic floor**



**Where to get help**

# EMMA'S STORY: "DON'T MISS OUT ON LIFE"

An Auckland mum and grandmother, who spent more than two decades trying to live with incontinence, encourages others to get the help they need and stop missing out on life.



"You deserve to live a full life doing the things that you enjoy. And if a bladder issue is stopping you, then get it sorted. And keep on pushing until it is sorted," Emma says.

"But don't wait twenty something years. Don't miss out on life. Or miss out on the things you enjoy in life because there is this issue. Don't be embarrassed. Don't let the shame of the issue get the better of you. And don't let it play with your head. It's not worth it."



[Watch Emma's story](#)



## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Pelvic health is important for everyone, regardless of age, race, gender, or fitness level. With support from our sponsors and the expertise of pelvic health physiotherapists Liz Childs and Leanne Wait, we've put together this guide to answer common questions regarding pelvic health.

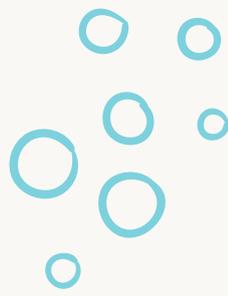
Liz (left) and Leanne (right) are based in Wellington and Hawke's Bay, respectively, and have nearly 50 years' experience with pelvic health physiotherapy between them.



### PELVIC HEALTH 101 VIDEO SERIES

Wherever you see this symbol, you will be linked to videos featuring Liz and Leanne, who will teach you everything you need to know about your pelvic health!





# WHAT ARE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES?

Pelvic floor muscles are an important but often overlooked set of muscles that everyone has. Watch our introduction videos (below) for advice on pelvic floor muscle basics including where they are and what role they play in your body.



## ANATOMY OF THE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

The Continence Foundation of Australia has helpful video visualisations of pelvic floor muscles available to watch on YouTube:

- Male pelvic floor muscle - 3D animation
- Female pelvic floor muscle - 3D animation



### PELVIC HEALTH 101: INTRODUCTION TO PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES



Find out:

- What are pelvic floor muscles?
- What do pelvic floor muscles do?



# ISSUES WITH PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

Because bladder, bowel, and pelvic health is often not talked about, it can be difficult to know whether or not you might have an issue, what is “normal”, and when you should consider seeking help. Watch our videos on pelvic floor muscle issues (below) to find out more.



## PELVIC HEALTH 101: ISSUES WITH PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES



Find out:

- What can go wrong with pelvic floor muscles?
- General symptoms of pelvic floor muscle dysfunction
- What options are there to improve continence?

## WHAT IS “NORMAL”?

What is “normal” is different from one person to the next, but our bladder and bowel guides are a good place to start. You can download these here or view them on the following pages.



## BLADDER AND BOWEL GUIDES

Available for  
download in six  
languages!



## BLADDER AND BOWEL DIARY

Get to know your  
own individual  
toileting patterns



Issues with your bladder or bowel control, sexual function, and/or core could be an indication that your pelvic floor muscles aren't functioning well.

# How do I know what's normal?

Have a look at our quick reference charts below

## *A healthy bladder*

- ✓ Doesn't leak, tells you when it's full, and gives you time to get to a toilet
- ✓ Can hold up to 400–600 ml of urine
- ✓ Empties 4–8 times a day
- ✓ May wake you up once a night to go the toilet (or twice if you are older)
- ✓ Completely empties each time

## *An unhealthy bladder*

- ✗ Leaks urine with coughing/sneezing/lifting
- ✗ Empties more than 8 times per day
- ✗ Voids frequently, passing small amounts
- ✗ Wakes you up more than twice a night
- ✗ Does not feel completely empty after passing urine
- ✗ Burns or stings when passing urine
- ✗ The urge is so strong you can't get to the toilet in time

If you think you might have an unhealthy bladder, don't panic! Call us on 0800 650 659 for some friendly advice, or go to [continence.org.nz](http://continence.org.nz) for more information. Many issues can be easily resolved, with the right support.

 0800 650 659  [continence.org.nz](http://continence.org.nz)

continence 

# How do I know what's normal?

Have a look at our quick reference charts below

## Healthy bowel

- ✓ Daily soft brown stool, a number four on the Bristol stool chart
- ✓ Smooth and shaped like a log
- ✓ No straining required
- ✓ No pain on passing a stool
- ✓ No bleeding
- ✓ No leakage or incontinence of stools

## Bristol Stool Chart

-  Type 1: Separate hard lumps, like pellets (hard to pass)
-  Type 2: Log shaped but lumpy
- ✓  **Type 3 is Healthy: Like a log but with cracks on the surface**
- ✓  **Type 4 is Healthy: Like a log or snake, smooth and soft**
-  Type 5: Soft blobs with clear-cut edges
-  Type 6: Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
-  Type 7: Watery, no solid pieces. Entirely liquid

## Unhealthy bowel

- ✗ Passing a stool 3 times a week or less
- ✗ Hard stools that are difficult to pass
- ✗ Having to strain to pass a stool
- ✗ Feeling of incomplete emptying of the bowel
- ✗ Passing blood from the bowel
- ✗ Pain on passing a stool
- ✗ No control over passing a stool - incontinence
- ✗ Very loose or watery stools
- ✗ Change from your usual bowel habit

0800 650 659 [continence.org.nz](http://continence.org.nz)

continence **NZ**



## Concerned about your bladder or bowel health? Not sure if you have a problem?

- Do you ever leak when you laugh, cough, or sneeze? Or when you exercise or play sport?
- Plan ahead so you are always near a toilet when you leave the house?
- Do you ever have to run to the bathroom?
- Worry you might not make it in time?
- Ever leak before you get there?
- Do you wake up to go to the toilet twice or more at night?
- Does your bladder sometimes feel like it isn't empty, even when you've just been to the toilet?
- Do you strain to empty your bowel?
- Ever soil your underwear?

**If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may have a bladder or bowel issue. Call us and we can help!**

 0800 650 659

 [continence.org.nz](https://www.continence.org.nz)

**continence** 

# LANGUAGE TRANSLATIONS



Our most popular continence resources, including our bladder and bowel guides, are available to download in six languages:

**ENGLISH**

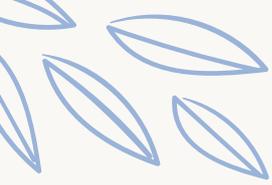
**TE REO MĀORI**

**MANDARIN  
CHINESE**

**HINDI**

**TONGAN**

**SAMOAN**



# WHAT CAN AFFECT PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES?



A number of factors and experiences can affect pelvic floor muscles, including:

- Surgical history (e.g. radical prostatectomy)
- Previous injury
- Heavy lifting (e.g. physical labour or gym)
- Chronic coughing or sneezing (e.g. from smoking or asthma)
- Menopause
- Weight
- Age
- Disuse
- Pregnancy and childbirth (see next section for further details).

## SURGERY AND PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

Surgery, such as radical prostatectomy, can affect the pelvic floor muscles therefore affecting bladder, bowel, and/or sexual function.

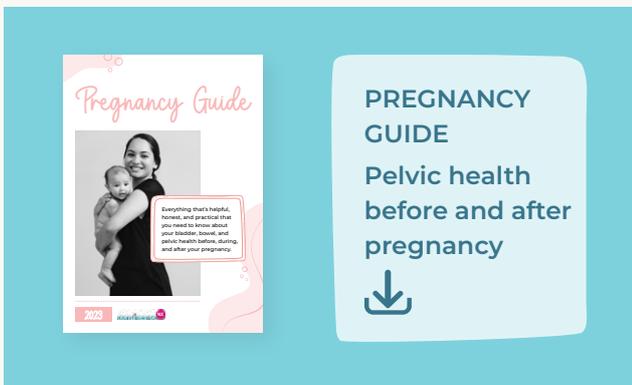


**ONLINE TRAINING**  
Prostate cancer  
and the pelvic floor  
muscles



# PELVIC HEALTH DURING AND AFTER PREGNANCY

Pregnancy is one of the more common times when people think about their pelvic health. Pregnancy changes place extra stress on the pelvic floor, and vaginal delivery can create further issues. Watch our pregnancy videos (right) to learn more about pelvic health during and after pregnancy, and you can download our pregnancy guide below for more in-depth information.



The image shows a teal button for downloading a pregnancy guide. On the left is a thumbnail for the 'Pregnancy Guide' featuring a woman holding a baby. The text on the thumbnail reads: 'Everything that's helpful, honest, and practical that you need to know about your bladder, bowel, and pelvic health before, during, and after your pregnancy.' Below the thumbnail is the year '2023' and the 'continence nz' logo. To the right of the thumbnail, the text reads 'PREGNANCY GUIDE Pelvic health before and after pregnancy' with a downward arrow icon.



**1 in 3 people who have ever had a baby experience bladder leakage as a result.**



## PELVIC HEALTH 101: PREGNANCY



Find out:

- How does pregnancy and delivery affect the pelvic floor?
- Who should do pelvic floor exercises during pregnancy?
- Perineal massage
- What is a prolapse, what are the symptoms, and how do I know if I have one?
- Bladder leakage after having children
- What happens to the abdominal muscles during and after pregnancy?
- Sex during and after pregnancy
- Exercise during and after pregnancy.

# STRENGTHENING YOUR PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

Although pelvic floor issues are more commonly associated with specific groups like birthing parents and older people, pelvic floor muscle strengthening is important for everyone. Just like any other muscle, strengthening your pelvic floor muscles helps to keep them functioning well. Because it's hard to activate muscles you can't see, people often have difficulty with exercising their pelvic floor muscles. Watch this section's videos (right) to learn how to exercise your pelvic floor muscles correctly.



**You may notice a difference in as little as two weeks after starting pelvic floor muscle exercises, although proper strengthening of the muscles will take several weeks to several months.**

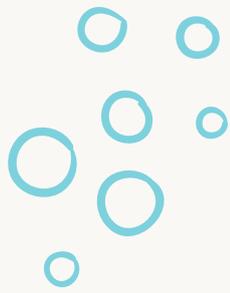


## PELVIC HEALTH 101: PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE EXERCISES



Find out:

- Why are pelvic floor muscle exercises important?
- How to do pelvic floor exercises
- How to tell you are doing pelvic floor muscle exercises correctly
- Things to avoid when doing pelvic floor muscle exercises.



# PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISE MYTHS AND TIPS

There are a number of myths and misunderstandings when it comes to pelvic health and pelvic floor muscle exercise. Watch our myths videos (right) to better understand how, when, and why you may need to exercise your pelvic floor, and view our resources (below) for some additional tips!

**A SIMPLE ONE-PAGE GUIDE**  
By pelvic health physio Liz Childs

↓

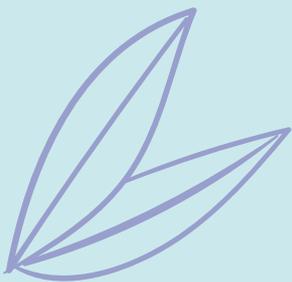


## PELVIC HEALTH 101: MYTHS ABOUT PELVIC HEALTH



Liz and Leanne debunk these common misconceptions about pelvic health and exercising your pelvic floor:

- ✗ “I don’t have any problems, so I don’t need to worry about my pelvic floor.”
- ✗ “I do pelvic floor exercises, so I don’t have to worry.”
- ✗ “It’s too late to strengthen my pelvic floor now.”
- ✗ “If I need to rush to the toilet, I need to strengthen my pelvic floor.”
- ✗ “I need to drink eight cups of water a day.”



# REDUCING PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE STRAIN

If you have pelvic floor issues, it is important to take extra care when engaging in general exercise and activity. Our videos (right) will help you choose activities that may be less likely to cause new or worsen existing pelvic floor problems.



**PELVIC FLOOR DIGITAL STICKER**  
Download one now to help start your pelvic floor exercises



↓



Have you heard of “The Knack”? This is another way to engage your pelvic floor during functional activity. Before coughing or sneezing, tense your pelvic floor muscles and pull in your lower abdominals to help prevent leakage.



## PELVIC HEALTH 101: SIMPLE CHANGES TO REDUCE STRAIN ON YOUR PELVIC FLOOR



Liz and Leanne demonstrate how you can reduce strain on your pelvic floor in your everyday life while you are:

- Bending and lifting
- Emptying your bowel
- Changing positions (e.g. moving from sitting to standing).

# WHERE TO GET HELP

There is support available for pelvic health problems, but knowing where to go or who to talk to can sometimes be difficult. Depending on your concern, if you need further advice, you could speak with:

- GP, midwife, or nurse
- Continence NZ
- Continence nurse
- Trained fitness professionals
- Pelvic health physiotherapist – watch our FAQs (right).

## CONTINENCE SERVICE PROVIDERS

Use our database to find one in your area



If you have sustained childbirth injuries on or after 1 Oct 2022, you may qualify for a contribution from ACC towards the cost of treatment.



## PELVIC HEALTH 101: PELVIC HEALTH PHYSIOTHERAPY FAQs



Liz and Leanne answer these common questions about pelvic health physiotherapy:

- What is a pelvic health physiotherapist and what do they do?
- How do I know if I need to see a pelvic health physiotherapist?
- What happens during a pelvic health physiotherapy visit?
- How long does treatment take?
- What would the cost be?
- Can all physiotherapists treat pelvic floor problems?
- How does a pelvic health physiotherapist assess pelvic floor muscles?