

Hypertonic Pelvic Floor (Overactive/tight pelvic floor muscles)

***It is important to note this information must be used as a guide only, if you are having on going pelvic floor issues I strongly suggest you consult with a pelvic floor physio who can assess you thoroughly and provide you with targeted guidance. ***

To have a strong and *effectively* functioning pelvic floor you need to ensure your pelvic floor cannot only contract strongly but also relax adequately. Contraction and connection with you pelvic floor is often talked about but relaxation is not emphasized enough. Ladies might believe they have a weak pelvic floor so continue with their kegals/pelvic floor exercises to try to improve this, however it is likely exacerbating it as your pelvic floor muscles may need to be allowed to lengthen somewhat.

So here's the info, let's hope it sticks with you cause it cause it could make all the difference for you.

Stress urinary incontinence (SUI) is caused by many factors with hypertonic (overactive) pelvic floor muscles being one of the culprits. If you have an overactive pelvic floor, it is potentially as a result of you constantly contracting your pelvic floor trying to avoid leaking. Constant contraction does not allow for any lengthening of your muscles which is important to have for an effective contraction. This therefore reduces the strength of your contractions as you do not have the capacity to relax the muscles enough to allow for a strong contraction.

Other potential causes of tight pelvic floor muscles may be:

- Frequent/constant sucking in of your belly thinking this will help it flatten, this tension also engages your pelvic floor, and therefore there may be frequent/constant pelvic floor muscle contraction.
- Stress/anxiety causing muscles to tighten
- Contacting core/pelvic floor constantly throughout a workout in an effort to avoid leaking

It is important to integrate your deep central stability core and breathing system, this is known as the core connection breath. When you inhale, your

diaphragm should go down, the effect of this should be to increase the pressure in your abdominal cavity which in turn pushes down on your pelvic floor (relaxes and lengthens your pelvic floor muscles). Then as you exhale this all recoils back up. Give it a go...lie, sit or stand with your body in a neutral position with your shoulders, ribs and hips all in alignment, inhale downwards thinking of expanding your lower ribs and core 360 degrees around and down, then allow it to all recoil as you exhale.

****Spend some time feeling and noticing your pelvic floor relax and lengthen on your inhale ****

If you do have a tight pelvic floor, focus more on the relaxation of your pelvic floor muscles rather than contracting them during your core connection breath.

Symptoms of a tight pelvic floor may include:

- A sensation of pressure or the inability to feel a pelvic floor contraction or relaxation.
- Pelvic pain, hip pain, constipation, coccyx(tailbone) pain , incontinence, delayed urine stream, urinary urgency, painful sex

Perform exercises and daily functional activities incorporating your core connection breath.

Try these breathing exercises in different positions such as child's pose, supported crouch, baby rock and a deep supported sitting/squatting position. See a video link of all these exercises below.

Once these are mastered, it is also important to be aware that you may have a weakness/scar tissue/strength or lengthening imbalance on one side of your pelvic floor so try this exercise to allow different areas of your core system to inflate and lengthen determined by the position you are sitting in: Kneel on your knees but leaning to one side, inflating one side more so during your inhale, repeat in different positions.

[See a demo of these exercises here](#)