

### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net)

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## Preparation for birth

### A patient's guide



Your pelvic floor is a broad sling of muscles, ligaments and sheet-like tissues that stretch from your pubic bone at the front of your body, to the base of your spine at the back. It supports your bladder, bowel, and uterus (womb), and gives you control over when you empty your bladder and bowel.

## Pelvic floor exercises

- \* Start as soon as possible
- \* 4 – 6 sets of 10 sustained holds and 10 fast contractions every day

**Step 1:** Sit, stand or lie in a comfortable position. You may find it easier lying on your side or kneeling on all fours if your bump is heavy.

**Step 2:** Squeeze and lift your pelvic floor muscles like you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind or stopping your flow of urine.

**Step 3:** Hold this for up to 10 seconds, and then relax for the same amount of seconds. Repeat 10 times.

**Step 4:** Draw in the pelvic floor muscle (as above) as quickly as possible. Fully relax the muscle and repeat 10 times.

See the Whittington Health leaflet “Physiotherapy - Pelvic floor muscle exercises for women” at <https://www.whittington.nhs.uk/> under “About Patients and Visitors”/“Patient Leaflets”

## Perineal massage

- \* Start at around 34 weeks pregnant
- \* 1 – 2 times per week



**Step 1:** Ensure your hands are clean. Get comfortable, lying on your bed with your knees bent and relaxed apart, and supported. You could also do this in the bath or shower.

**Step 2:** Apply plain oil (e.g. olive, sunflower or almond oil) to your fingers, thumb and the entrance to the vagina.

**Step 3:** Place your thumbs inside the vagina. Press them firmly towards your perineum and against the sides of your vagina until you feel a tingling.

**Step 4:** Firmly massage in a U-shaped motion. Move from the sides of the vagina downwards towards the perineum, and back up again. Do for between 1 – 5 minutes. It should not be painful.

- \* Your partner could also help you if you are comfortable with this.
- \* It is not advised to do this if you have a current vaginal infection or thrush symptoms.