



APPENDIX 3



Leaflet updates available at <https://www.unitysexualhealth.co.uk/stis-and-testing/infoandtesting/>

PELVIC FLOOR RELAXATION GUIDE

To locate the pelvic floor muscles is often quite difficult because there isn't anything obvious to see or feel moving. Your ability to consciously relax your pelvic floor muscles is important. It is only through learning to relax these muscles that they can become functional again and **most importantly**, pain-free. In our experience men with the CPPS often tense their tummy (and pelvic floor) when they breathe in – this can make their symptoms worse.

The feeling of relaxing or dropping the pelvic floor is similar to the moment of relief when you have reached the bathroom; when you urinate or have a bowel movement, you first relax the pelvic floor. This action is therefore already “known” by your body and regularly practiced, the aim of this exercise is to increase your conscious awareness of what's happening, so that unnecessary levels of tension within the pelvic floor can be released.

The best way to consciously release tension from the pelvic floor muscles is to try to release the muscles while you inhale. When you breathe in deeply your diaphragm lowers and your tummy muscles go out to make room for your breathe. (watch the video below) This is a natural time for your pelvic floor muscles to lower and relax, again to make extra space for air. When you breathe out, your tummy and pelvic floor muscles tighten to push air out. With practice, you can feel this pelvic floor rhythm, and relaxing your pelvic floor gets easier. If you can identify this **pelvic floor rhythm**, relaxing or dropping your pelvic floor will be much easier.

In order to drop the pelvic floor, start by gently contracting the muscles to feel what tightening and lifting the muscles feels like. Now relax, and let go of the tension. Feel the difference between tension and relaxation. It is helpful to stand in front of a mirror to look at your contraction and relaxation. When you perform a pelvic floor contraction the penis and testicles should lift slightly. When you release tension and drop the pelvic floor muscles, you should see in the mirror the testicles and penis drop as your pelvic floor muscles relax. Don't make it happen, visualise and let it happen.

Practice the rhythm of breathing and dropping the pelvic floor muscles at least three times daily doing tensing (gentle) of the muscle for a count of 3 and relaxing for a count of 6 until you establish the “drop” as a familiar sensation. A good time to practice this is when you go to pass urine especially if you are having difficulty passing urine. Some men find this easier to do when they are sitting down. Ideally you should then *try* and do this every hour for a few minutes while breathing so over time this may become your natural breathing rhythm.

Eventually, once you have mastered the art of relaxing your pelvic floor muscles, you will need to check in with your pelvic floor throughout the day and let go of any tension that you discover.

Watch this video – Michelle Kenway : Pelvic Floor Relaxation for Men with Chronic Pelvic Pain

<https://youtu.be/Fac5ihuQ1Ws>

Easy stretches to relax the pelvic floor muscles from the Pelvic Pain Foundation of Australia

<https://www.pelvicpain.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Easy-Stretches-to-Relax-the-Pelvis-Stretches.pdf>