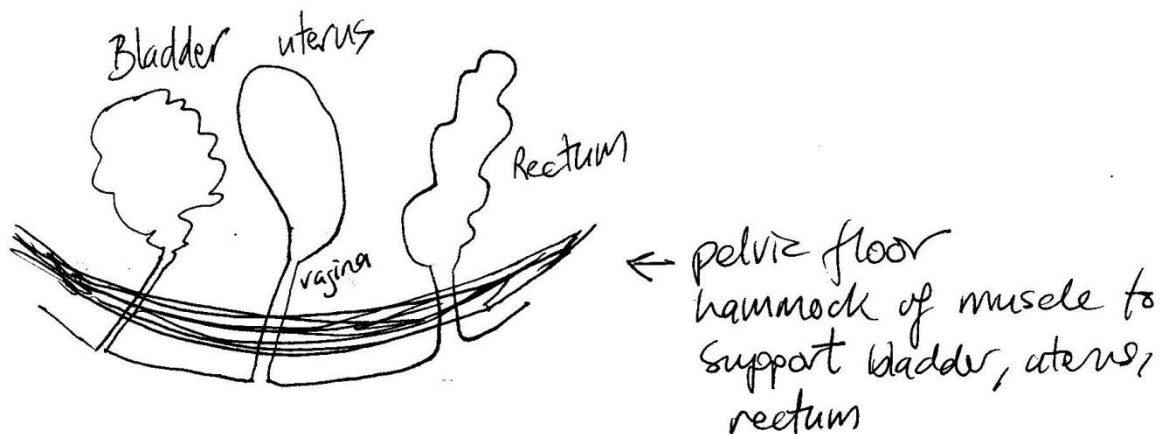


The Pelvic Floor

The pelvic floor is a network of muscles, ligaments, and tissues that act like a hammock to support the organs of the pelvis: the uterus, vagina, bladder, urethra, and rectum.



Being pregnant and having a vaginal delivery may weaken or stretch some of the muscles of the pelvic floor, or even result in damage to pelvic floor ligaments or tissues. This can cause urinary incontinence, decreased sensation during sexual intercourse, or even pelvic organ prolapse (ie the vagina, bladder, rectum or uterus drop down and protrude into or outside of the vagina).

However, doing pelvic floor exercises regularly during and also after pregnancy can help to maintain tone and strength in the pelvic floor and so prevent the above mentioned conditions. Pelvic floor exercises will also be helpful during labour and help to reduce the likelihood of tearing.

How to do pelvic floor exercises?

- Sit comfortably, in a cross-legged position, sitting on a birthing ball, or on a chair with a cushion.
- Bring your awareness down to the pelvic floor area, perhaps even visualise the hammock shape of the pelvic floor supporting the pelvic organs.
- Be aware also of your breathing – without changing it just start to observe it moving in and out of the body.
- On an out breath contract all of the pelvic floor, ie squeeze and lift the urinary sphincters, anal sphincters and the muscles of the vagina. Hold for a moment or two, or if you can for the duration of the out breath.
- As you breathe in release the contraction.
- Repeat the above for a couple of minutes, contracting on the out breath and releasing on the in breath.

You may find this exercise difficult to do at first. The pelvic floor is not a part of the body that most of us are familiar with or are used to exercising. So be patient! With practice it will become easier.



Note: In yoga the pelvic floor area is associated with instinct, self-confidence and the more primal aspects of our personality.

NB: Pelvic floor exercises should be done every day!!

