

[IMAGE]

## Stretch Out That Tight Pelvic Floor

By Editorial Staff

Pregnancy, obesity, frequent straining and other factors can contribute to pelvic floor dysfunction, a constellation of disorders that affect millions of women, particularly with age. Pelvic floor tightness is one of the most common consequences, leading to pelvic pain, urinary dysfunction and other issues.

Fortunately, simple stretches can be a good first step to help loosen up the pelvic floor and entire pelvic region. Here are three great ones you can do in the comfort of your own home:

*Piriformis Stretch:* Lie on your back with both knees bent. Cross one leg over the other knee in a fixed position so the foot rests on the lower thigh, just above the kneecap. Hold the back of the uncrossed leg and pull it toward your chest until you feel a stretch in the opposite buttock (where the piriformis muscle is located). You also can do this stretch in a seated position: sit upright and lean forward with your chest to increase the stretch.

*Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch:* In a half-kneeling position with the front leg bent 90 degrees (as if you're doing a lunge), squeeze the glute muscle of the back leg, relax and repeat. Keep a straight spine with head facing forward. If you're doing this properly, you should feel the stretch in the hip flexor muscle, down the front of your back leg where the thigh meets the hip. (To increase the stretch, progress to elevating the back foot up on a stable surface, such as a wall or short bench.

*Quadruped Adductor Rocks:* On your hands and knees, slide your knees out as far as you can tolerate, keeping the heels of your feet together. Then sit back slowly, as if you're attempting to touch your buttocks to your feet. Keep your spine straight throughout. Take a deep breath, sit up and repeat.

All three of these stretches can be performed for 30 seconds at a time and repeated during the day as needed. Of course, talk to your doctor first if you are experiencing signs and symptoms of pelvic floor dysfunction so they can evaluate you and determine the best course of action.

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