



Pelvic Health

By Nadeane Nelson, Senior Physical Therapist

Pelvic Health issues may occur in both men and women of all ages. Women are particularly susceptible to pelvic health issues due to our anatomy, childbearing, and decreased hormones in menopause. As both men and women age, muscle strength is lost if we fail to exercise and the pelvic floor is no exception.

A weak pelvic floor may lead to incontinence of urine, gas or stool. In order to reduce this risk, it is important to keep the pelvic floor strong with Kegel exercises (contracting and relaxing the pelvic floor). To test if you are doing a contraction correctly, you can try to slow or stop your stream of urine. Old advice encouraged Kegel exercises while voiding, but we now know this can prevent the bladder from emptying completely, so it is no longer recommended. Do not hold your breath when doing a Kegel and imagine you are pulling the pelvic floor up and in. This can be done in any position. Sometimes it is difficult to do Kegels correctly and people may need help from a care provider such as a pelvic health physical therapist.

If muscles are weak at first, it may be challenging to contract the pelvic floor for very long or do many repetitions. With time and practice you can do the following:

- Build up to 10 - second hold, follow with a 10 - second relax. Work up to 10 in a row.
- Fast Kegels also help. Try to contract and relax the pelvic floor 10 times in a row.

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- Doing the first two, 3-4 times a day, can maximize strength in 3-6 months. Once you feel stronger you can do Kegels 1-2 times a day for maintenance.

Use a strong Kegel when you need it the most:

- Contract the pelvic floor up and in when you cough, laugh or sneeze to give more support and stop a leak.
- To stop an urge requires a bit more work:
 - Stop moving and stay still.
 - Contract your pelvic floor.
 - Distract yourself from the urge by thinking of something else, counting backwards, or focusing on your surroundings.
 - Once the urge has passed, walk calmly to the bathroom rather than rushing. Urges may reappear before you get to the toilet, so stay still and repeat the steps again.

It is important to mention that urgency to void and incontinence can be much worse if we are dehydrated or constipated. The bladder does not like dark, concentrated urine, and constipation can put pressure on the bladder. Unless otherwise advised by your health care practitioner, aim to drink 6-8 cups of fluid a day, with most of that from plain water. If you are sweating more from exercise or hot weather you may need more than 8 cups of fluid. A good rule is to aim for pale yellow urine during the day, which shows you are well hydrated. What we drink also matters. Coffee, tea, or pop can irritate the bladder and cause more urgency to void. Limit these types of drinks if this is a concern for you.

There is a lot of information online and our Pelvic Floor Pathway Clinic has a website offering public education. Search **SHA** (Sask Health Authority) **Pelvic Floor Pathway**. While our clinic only sees women, much of the incontinence advice on the website pertains to men as well. Our website has a list of pelvic health physical therapy clinics if you wish to pursue further care. Family doctors, medical specialists and nurse practitioners are also trained to provide advice on pelvic health.



Safe Spinal Movements to Reduce Fracture Risk

By Crystal Wright, Health Educator

Physical activity plays an important role in reducing the risk of fractures. Strength training, balance exercises, and flexibility exercises all contribute to improved stability and bone health. It's equally important to move safely during these activities. When bending or twisting your spine, move mindfully. People at higher risk of fractures may need to limit:

- Repetitive bending and twisting.
- Bending all the way forward or to the side.
- Twisting all the way to the side.
- Bending or twisting while holding a weight or something heavy.



DON'T: Bend with your spine



DO: Bend with your hips and knees

Bone fractures can happen for a variety of reasons, and at any age. However, older adults, people with osteoporosis, and people on certain medications are at higher risk. Safe movement applies to all physical activities in our community, at home, at work, or during leisure and exercise. Daily life tasks might involve bending and twisting of your spine. Let's be sure to move safely throughout all activities!

Testimonial - FIM Participants

The group at Westgate Alliance Church averages 35 people per class and it's not uncommon for a new person to join that was invited by a friend. As much as people enjoy being active, they really appreciate being together! This past fall, we decided to put in an order for FIM t-shirts, if anyone wanted one. Over 20 people ordered a shirt and once the others saw the shirts, more people wanted to place an order! Four trips to Market Mall later, here's a glimpse of our group!



**Forever...in motion
Westgate Group**

Forever...in motion Leaders!



Cudworth Leader Training



**Condensed Leader Training
Forest Grove Community Church**



**Circle Drive Alliance Church
Leader Training**





Is Walking Enough to Prevent Falls?

By Sherri Wagenhoffer & Garrett Saxton, Physical Therapists



With spring around the corner, many older adults return to the now snow-free sidewalks and parks to start walking again. Walking is fantastic exercise for our physical and mental health - but is it enough to prevent falls?

Falls happen for complex reasons, including:

- Poor balance
- Dizziness
- Weak leg muscles
- Slower reaction times
- Medication side effects
- Vision changes

Older adults with strong legs and good balance are less likely to fall. Walking is great for general fitness; however, it doesn't strengthen the specific core and hip muscles that help maintain balance.

Try adding these movements to your walk to challenge your balance:

- Sit to stand from a bench.
- Heel rises while waiting at lights.
- Pause and stand on one leg (hold onto a solid object if needed).
- Step up onto a stair or curb while holding a railing.
- Walk in a figure eight pattern around trees, post, etc.
- Use walking poles to improve your upper body and core strength.

Want to learn more? Join the **Staying on Your Feet** program - a one-hour group program held over 12 weeks that includes education and exercise, with a focus on fall prevention. Phone 306-655-3418 to inquire. Another option is to join the **Forever...in motion** drop-in exercise program held in numerous locations around Saskatoon. Call 306-844-4080 to inquire.

Always prioritize your safety - use a walking aid if needed and consult a healthcare professional before starting to exercise.

Bottom line: Walking by itself isn't enough. Falls occur for many reasons, so to help prevent them, it's important to also include specific strength and balance exercises.



Resources and Events to be Aware of ...

Forever...in motion Leader Training

Saskatoon & Area:

- **Saskatoon** - April 21, 22, 28, 29, May 5 - Ebenezer Baptist Church
- **Saskatoon** - Condensed Training - May 22, 29 - Venvi, The Bentley Saskatoon
- **Rural** - To be determined

Please contact Brenda at (306) 655-2454 or brenda.chomyn@saskhealthauthority.ca to register or for more information.

Regina & Area:

- To be determined

Please contact Marisol Molina-Smith at (306) 766-7163 or marisol.molinasmith@saskhealthauthority.ca for more information.

SPRA Training:

- To be determined

Please contact Kelsey at (306) 780-9219 or kmichaluk@spra.sk.ca for more information.



Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), in partnership with Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, provides **Forever...in motion** as a health promotion strategy that strives to improve the health of Older Adults living in community.

For more information about **Forever...in motion** in your region contact:

Saskatoon & area:

- Kimberly Willison (306) 844-4081 or kimberly.willison@saskhealthauthority.ca

Regina & area:

- Marisol Molina-Smith (306) 766-7163
marisol.molinasmith@saskhealthauthority.ca

Regions outside Saskatoon and Regina:

- Kelsey Michaluk (306) 780-9219 or kmichaluk@spra.sk.ca

