

prostate cancer surgery, physiotherapy and your pelvic floor

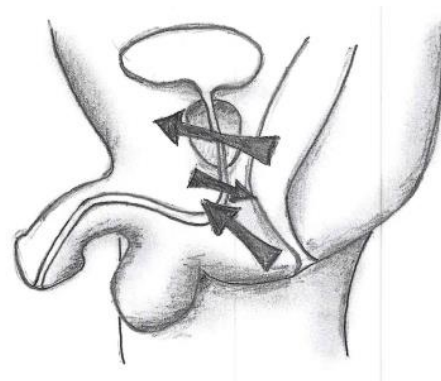
Physiotherapy has an important role to play before and after surgery for Prostate Cancer. Best practice Physiotherapy, delivered by an experienced and appropriately trained clinician, can contribute to better outcomes through education, comprehensive pelvic floor management and general exercise prescription. The information below is designed to help you better understand the role of your pelvic floor muscles, especially in regards to Prostate Cancer surgery and controlling your urine.

why has my pelvic floor become so important?

For most blokes, Prostate Cancer surgery can change the way that your urinary system works, at least in the short to medium term. The surgery often places greater emphasis on your pelvic floor muscles, and the role that they play in controlling urine tube closing pressure.

what is my pelvic floor?

Your pelvic floor refers to several muscles located deep in your pelvis; around your penis, testicles, urine tube and anus. It's important to understand that they work as a team. When the team is winning, the pressure inside your urine tube is greater than the pressure coming down from the bladder. If the opposite occurs, you may have troubles with leakage. The image to the right shows how these muscles work as a team to *kink the hose*.



how do i do a good pelvic floor contraction?

The latest research suggests that for most blokes, the best way to activate your pelvic floor is to think about *shortening the length of your penis* or *contract as if you are stopping the flow of urine*. Although we know that these are the cues that works best for most blokes, it is critical to ensure that you receive an individualised assessment of your own pelvic floor function. We all do things differently and we all have our own strengths and weaknesses. You can liken this concept to asking a room of people to *lift your leg* – there are many different ways to do this (e.g., forwards, sideways, at the hip, at the knee etc.) and many different abilities. A well trained and equipped Physiotherapist will use biofeedback techniques (for example, transperineal real-time ultrasound) to assess exactly how your pelvic floor is working, and to identify any specific areas for improvement.

when, where and how many?

Ideally, you would start to train your pelvic floor four to six weeks before surgery. This provides enough time to modify your technique (if required), change habits, improve coordination, strength, power and endurance. Research suggests that after surgery, good urine control often requires better than average (and better than before surgery) pelvic floor function. In the initial surgical recovery period, you'll need to take a break from your exercises, especially when your catheter is in. Once this is out, you'll receive advice on when to start them again.

Following an individualised assessment, you can also get instruction on exactly when and where you should be doing your exercises. This may include one position (such as lying down) or multiple (lying, sitting and standing). You may even be ready to commence using your pelvic floor as you move between positions (e.g., sitting to standing) or in specific circumstances (e.g., before a cough).

To start with, the most important thing to do is to practice well and with good technique. In addition to checking your technique with an appropriately trained Physiotherapist, you can get an idea of how you are going with some simple DIY tests. Can you see your genitals lift slightly as you do the contraction? You shouldn't see or feel any movement of your tummy, buttocks or legs. If you place your fingers on your perineum (between your scrotum and your anus), can you feel the muscles swell slightly?

The exact number of pelvic floor exercises that you should do will depend on your current abilities and the areas that have been identified for improvement. Generally speaking, the research suggests that blokes that do more get better quicker, but it is possible to overdo it, especially if you are using the wrong muscles. Getting the technique and dosage right is often critical to success.

what do i do if i have more questions?

It is likely that your Urologist will refer you to a trained Physiotherapist before surgery – that Physiotherapist should be well placed to answer your questions. On the Darling Downs and in Toowoomba, Men's Health Physiotherapy Toowoomba (mhPT) provides expert and dedicated services to this patient group. Please feel free to contact our clinic on the details above if you have any questions, or if you'd like to book an appointment.