

## Physical therapy for the pelvic floor

### Function of the pelvic floor

- Support: the muscles support the pelvic organs, i.e. bladder, uterus and colon against gravity and resist any increase in pressure in the abdominal cavity.
- Control of continence: pelvic muscles maintain urinary and fecal continence by keeping the urethral and anal sphincter closed while we breathe, cough or laugh.
- Sexual: the pelvic floor provides tone for the vaginal walls, maintains clitoral erection and comes to a full contraction with orgasm.

Muscles that are exercised are strong and flexible.

Painful pelvic floor area is often due to tight muscles, leading to:

- Decreased blood flow in the area
- Decreased oxygen supply to cells, and increased lactic acid
- Symptoms of burning, throbbing, stabbing pain or rawness of the vagina.

### Exercises for the pelvic floor

Muscle work known as Kegel exercises involves the contraction of the pelvic floor with compression of the urethra (stopping the flow of urine) and tightening of the anus (stopping gas from escaping).

Become reacquainted with your body by:

- Enjoying massages and simple touch
- Practicing sensate focus exercises with partner
- Exploring orgasms with and without partner

Communicate with partner and with doctor/health care provider about your concerns and about problems that arise.