



**EVERY
SQUEEZE
COUNTS:**

**THE
MISSING
REP**

**A GUIDE FOR PERSONAL
TRAINERS ON PELVIC FLOOR
& BLADDER HEALTH**

YOUR GUIDE TO THE PELVIC FLOOR & BLADDER HEALTH

Section 1 Bladder Basics

- 06 An introduction to bladder health
- 07 The anatomy of the bladder
- 08 How to help your clients keep their bladder healthy
- 09 Understanding stress incontinence
- 10 Understanding overactive bladder
- 10 Understanding underactive bladder
- 11 Managing bladder health

Section 2 The Missing Rep Pelvic Floor Practice

- 13 What is the pelvic floor?
- 14 How to find your pelvic floor muscles
- 14 Why the pelvic floor matters in training
- 15 Pelvic floor exercises
- 16 Helping clients get started with pelvic floor exercises
- 17 Healthy bladder and bowel habits to coach your clients
- 18 Remember your clients are not alone
- 19 Further information

As a personal trainer, you're in a unique position to help clients strengthen their bodies and improve their quality of life. But there's one muscle group that rarely makes it onto the training plan, the pelvic floor. We call it the missing rep.



The pelvic floor is a critical part of the core system, working with the abdominals, back muscles, and diaphragm to support movement, control the bladder and bowel, and stabilise the spine and pelvis. Yet because it's hidden, it's often overlooked... until a problem arises.

Your clients may never mention bladder weakness or leakage during exercise. Not because it's rare, but because it's stigmatised. By knowing the basics of pelvic floor and bladder health, you can:

- 01 Integrate pelvic floor work into training just like any other muscle group
- 02 Make safe exercise modifications for those experiencing symptoms
- 03 Provide evidence-based advice for healthy habits
- 04 Signpost clients to specialist help when needed

This guide draws on expert continence care resources and turns them into practical advice for the gym floor. It will help you add the missing rep into every workout programme, so your clients can train with confidence.

As a trainer, it's important to remember that anyone experiencing bladder issues should always consult their GP or a specialist. They can provide a professional diagnosis and prescribe medication if needed. For additional guidance, Bladder & Bowel UK offers confidential support from specialist nurses and can provide information on local NHS continence advisors. This resource is invaluable for helping clients manage symptoms effectively and safely.

TENA recommends that if you suffer from bladder weakness or continence problems you should seek professional advice.

If you would like more information on our TENA product range call 0800 655 6022 or visit www.tena.co.uk/contact-us

For further advice, visit the NHS or Bladder & Bowel UK websites, listed below.

NHS | Urinary Incontinence
www.nhs.uk/conditions/urinary-incontinence

Bladder & Bowel UK | Support
www.bbuk.org.uk

01 BLADDER HEALTH BASICS



A healthy bladder and bowel are essential to your clients' overall well-being, yet in the UK many people experience problems in these areas. Because these issues are often seen as embarrassing, clients may not speak up, even with you, and instead adapt their training or lifestyle in silence.

As a trainer, you are in a unique position to spot signs, provide basic guidance, and encourage open, stigma-free conversations. This guide will help you understand the most common bladder and bowel issues your clients may face, the myths and misconceptions that surround them, and how to offer safe, supportive advice.

With the right approach, many of these problems can be managed effectively, and in some cases, resolved completely. Knowing how to guide your clients toward professional help, lifestyle changes, and appropriate products can make a huge difference to their comfort, performance, and confidence in the gym.



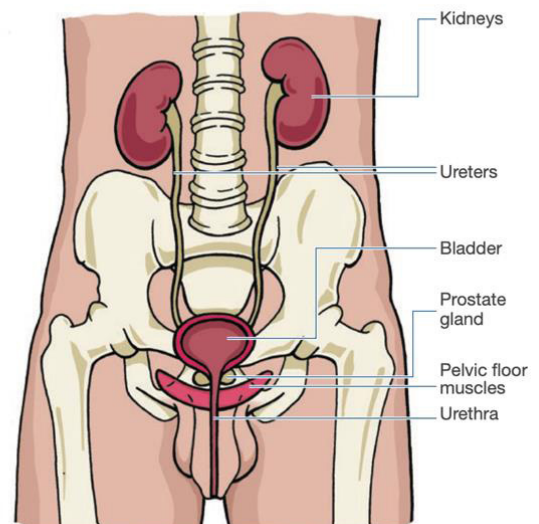
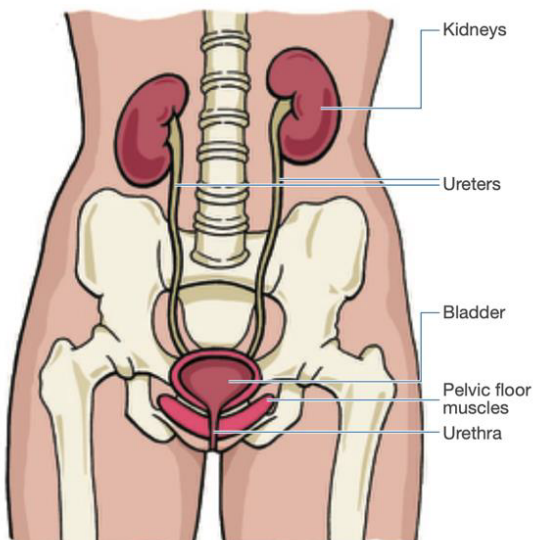
THE ANATOMY OF THE BLADDER

The urinary system

This is composed of two kidneys, the ureters, the bladder and the urethra. Urine is made by the kidneys and carried to the bladder by the two ureters where it is stored until you go to the toilet.

The pelvic floor muscles help prevent leaks. They are made up of several layers of muscle which hold the bladder in place and provide support. This muscle is part of the anatomy of all people.

There are three openings through the pelvic floor in women and two in men – the anus, the vagina and urethra in women and the anus and urethra in men. For men, the prostate gland surrounds and lies in the wall of the urethra, just below its connection with the bladder. The muscles support these three openings, but if they are weakened or not in good condition, they can't support them effectively.



HOW TO HELP YOUR CLIENTS KEEP THEIR BLADDER HEALTHY

The bladder has several functions:

01 HOLDS UP TO 500MLS OF URINE

02 EMPTIES AT A CONVENIENT TIME ON DEMAND

The bladder works through a coordination of nerves and muscles. When this control system is disrupted, it can lead to bladder leaks, also known as incontinence. As a trainer, you can help clients reduce their risk or manage mild symptoms by encouraging the following healthy habits:

Hydration

Aim for 1–1.5 litres of fluids a day, including those from food. If your client notices that caffeinated drinks make their bladder more sensitive, suggest trying caffeine-free alternatives.

Nutrition and weight management

A balanced diet supports bladder health. Excess bodyweight increases pressure on the bladder and pelvic floor, so helping your clients maintain a healthy weight can significantly reduce symptoms.

Medication check

Encourage clients to speak with their GP or healthcare provider about any medication that could be affecting their bladder control, as adjustments may be possible.

Physical activity

Regular exercise, such as brisk walking, can improve bladder function and reduce any night-time leaks. Include pelvic floor strengthening as part of a client's core work to further support bladder control.

But first, make sure your client feels comfortable

Bladder weakness can impact a person's mood, self-confidence and mental health in general. That's why, when speaking to your clients, it's essential you make sure they feel comfortable and safe when having discussions about their bladder health.

Some tips to start the conversation are:

Respect their privacy

Have the conversation in a quiet place where they can speak freely without being overheard.

Listen and offer reassurance

Opening up can be tough. If someone opens up to you, make sure you give them the space to talk and guide them to useful resources where you can.

Normalise the conversation

Remind your client that bladder leaks are more common than they think and nothing to be ashamed about.

UNDERSTANDING STRESS INCONTINENCE

There are several types of incontinence, but stress incontinence is one you may encounter often in clients.

What it is

The pelvic floor muscles act like a sling, supporting the pelvic organs and helping to keep bladder control. When these muscles and their supporting ligaments are weakened, stress incontinence can occur.

Common symptoms

Leakage of urine during coughing, laughing, sneezing, or exercise - especially during high-impact or high-load movements.

Why it happens

Pelvic floor muscles can weaken for many reasons. Some of the most common reasons, include:

- Childbirth
- Chronic coughing
- Menopause-related hormonal changes
- Chronic constipation and straining
- Obesity and increased abdominal pressure

How it's treated

01 First-line treatment

Daily pelvic floor exercises, performed correctly and consistently, are the gold standard. Improvements may take three months or more. This is where you can help make a difference!

02 Referral

If symptoms continue, clients may be referred to a pelvic health physiotherapist for assessment and training.

03 Surgical options

In cases where exercises and therapy don't resolve the problem, various surgical procedures are available. These decisions should always be discussed with a doctor.

Trainer takeaway

You can help by integrating pelvic floor work into training programmes, adapting exercises to reduce leakage triggers, and encouraging clients to seek professional help if symptoms continue.



UNDERSTANDING AN OVERACTIVE OR UNDERACTIVE BLADDER

An overactive bladder (OAB) causes a sudden, strong urge to urinate, often followed by frequent trips to the toilet - including waking more than once at night. If a toilet isn't nearby, this is when leaks occur.

In many cases, the exact cause is unknown, though conditions affecting the nervous system, such as stroke or Parkinson's disease, can all contribute.

Common misconceptions

Many clients believe that drinking less will improve their symptoms. In reality, reduced fluid intake can make things worse as concentrated urine irritates the bladder and increases urgency.

What happens with OAB

- 01 The bladder sends strong signals to the brain to empty, even when it's not full.
- 02 This creates an uncontrollable need to go - known as urgency.
- 03 The urge can be difficult to stop, especially during exercise or if toilets aren't easily accessible.

Trainer role

While you can't diagnose or treat OAB, you can:

- 01 Encourage clients to maintain healthy hydration (1-1.5 litres per day, more if training).
- 02 Support them in avoiding bladder irritants (e.g. caffeine, fizzy drinks, certain herbal teas).
- 03 Incorporate pelvic floor exercises into their daily warm-ups.
- 04 Suggest they keep a bladder diary to discuss with their GP or continence specialist.
- 05 Encourage them to visit their GP or doctor for support.

An underactive bladder occurs when the bladder muscles can't contract strongly enough to empty fully. This leaves urine behind, which can overstretch the bladder and, over time, cause it to enlarge.

Causes include

- 01 Nerve damage affecting bladder control.
- 02 Urethral obstruction (in men, often due to an enlarged prostate).

Common symptoms

- 01 Frequent trips to the toilet with only small amounts passed.
- 02 Straining to urinate.
- 03 Recurrent UTIs (urinary tract infections).
- 04 Dribbling after urination.

Trainer role

While an underactive bladder requires medical assessment, you can:

- 01 Encourage clients to take their time when urinating and avoid rushing.
- 02 Promote healthy bladder habits and hydration.
- 03 Be aware of symptoms that warrant a GP referral.

MANAGING BLADDER PROBLEMS

Some bladder problems can't be completely cured, but many can be effectively managed while awaiting treatment or alongside rehabilitation. As a trainer, you can't treat these issues, but you can help clients understand the options and encourage them to seek the right professional support.

Common management methods

01 Absorbent pads and pants

Available in most supermarkets, pharmacies or at www.tena.co.uk/women, these can help clients feel confident during exercise. They're designed specifically for bladder leaks, offering better absorbency and fit than menstrual products.

02 Medication

Certain prescriptions can help reduce urgency, frequency, or night-time trips to the toilet. Any medication changes or prescriptions must be managed by a GP.

03 Surgery

In some cases, surgical procedures may offer a long-term solution, but they come with potential risks and side effects. Clients should discuss all options thoroughly with their GP or specialist before deciding.

Trainer tip

Your role is to normalise the conversation, adapt training to keep clients active and confident, and refer them to healthcare professionals for ongoing management.



02 THE MISSING REP PELVIC FLOOR PRACTICE

WHAT IS THE PELVIC FLOOR?

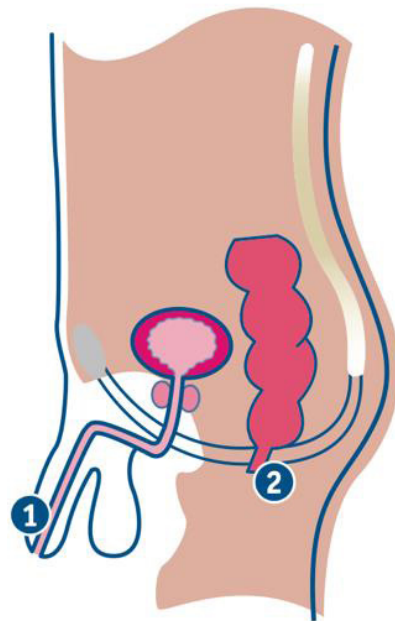
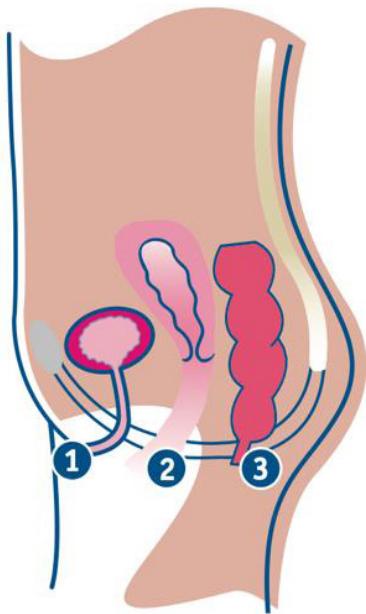
The pelvic floor is a strong 'sling' or 'hammock' of muscles that help to support the womb (in women), the bladder and the bowel. The muscles stretch across the inside of the pelvis and are attached to the pubic bone at the front and to the coccyx at the back.

In women it has three openings

- 01 For the urethra, the small tube that carries urine from the bladder
- 02 For the bowel
- 03 For the vagina

In men it has two openings

- 01 For the urethra, the small tube that carries urine from the bladder
- 02 For the bowel



Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself passing wind. Squeeze the muscles around the back passage. This is the back part of the pelvic floor. Now imagine that you are about to pass urine. This is the front part of the pelvic floor. Do not squeeze your legs together; tighten your buttocks or hold your breath.

Why the pelvic floor matters in training

The pelvic floor supports and holds in place all the organs in the lower abdomen. This support is especially important during any form of exercise, even something as simple as walking. These muscles need to contract, relax, and then tighten again on demand.

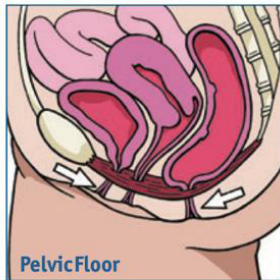
If the pelvic floor becomes overstretched or weakened, your client may experience small leaks of urine when coughing, sneezing, or when carrying weight.

PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

A good way to incorporate pelvic floor exercises into your clients' routines is to add them to the warm-up. This will ensure they are part of their daily routine when they're in their sessions, but also when they're working out alone.

The below exercises are known as Kegels, or pelvic floor exercises, and are one of the most effective ways of improving and maintaining bowel and bladder functions.

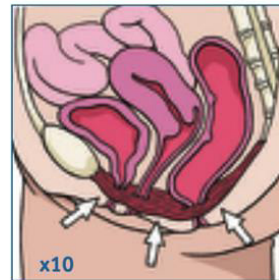
Exercise 1



Tighten the pelvic floor as long and as hard as you can.

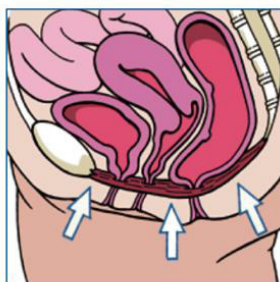


Try to build up to a maximum of 10 seconds.

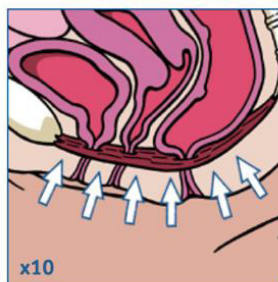


Rest for a couple of seconds and then repeat 10 times.

Exercise 2



Draw in the pelvic floor and hold for one second before relaxing.



Repeat in short succession up to 10 times.



Try to do these exercises 6 times a day for 12 weeks.

And remember, it is just as important to completely relax the pelvic floor when doing Kegel squeezes as it is to contract them, ensuring a full range of motion.

When clients first begin pelvic floor training, it's important they find a quiet space and take the time to focus so they can locate the correct muscles. Encourage them to read or listen to the sequence first so they understand the steps before starting.

Starting position suggestion

- 01 Sit comfortably on a chair or bench with knees apart and feet flat on the floor
- 02 Lean forward slightly and rest forearms on thighs

Reminders for correct technique

- 01 Keep breathing normally - no breath-holding
- 02 Avoid pushing down; focus on lifting and squeezing
- 03 Don't tighten abs, buttocks, or thighs
- 04 Keep knees relaxed and apart

The below exercises are known as Kegels, or pelvic floor exercises, and are one of the most effective ways of improving and maintaining bowel and bladder functions.

How clients can check if they're engaging the muscles correctly

For men

They may feel the base of the penis lift slightly during a squeeze.

For women

Imagine they're holding a tampon inside the vagina, they should feel a tightening around it as they contract. Another option is to gently squeeze during sexual intercourse and ask a partner if they can feel it.



HEALTHY BLADDER AND BOWEL HABITS TO COACH YOUR CLIENTS

01

GO WHEN YOU'VE GOT TO GO

Delaying can lead to constipation or bowel issues.

02

KEEP THINGS MOVING

By encouraging a high-fibre diet, hydration, and avoiding straining during bowel movements.

03

SKIP THE “JUST IN CASE” TOILET TRIPS

This can train the bladder to hold less, increasing the need to go more often.

04

SUPPORT HEALTHY WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Excess weight increases pressure on the bladder and pelvic floor.

05

SIP SMART

Maintain good fluid intake but limit caffeine from tea, coffee, cola, and energy drinks, as they can irritate the bladder and make control more difficult.

06

TACKLE THE TRIGGERS

If a client has a chronic cough or other medical issue that increases abdominal pressure, advise them to seek medical review.

REMEMBER YOUR CLIENTS ARE NOT ALONE

Bladder issues are more common than most people realise - affecting over six million people in the UK. Many of your clients may be managing symptoms silently, assuming they're unusual or that nothing can be done.

Reassure them that help is available. GPs, practice nurses, community nurses, and health visitors are all experienced in supporting people with bladder problems. In most areas, there are also specialist continence nurses or advisors who can provide tailored advice and treatment plans.

While you can coach clients on general pelvic floor awareness and safe exercise habits, these exercises are most effective when taught or checked by a healthcare professional with pelvic floor expertise - such as a pelvic health physiotherapist or continence advisor.

Your role is to normalise the conversation, support their training and guide them towards the right help.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Thank you for taking the time to explore this guide. As a trainer, you play a unique role in helping clients move, perform, and live confidently - and that includes supporting their pelvic floor and bladder health. By integrating these principles into your sessions, you're not only helping prevent problems but also empowering clients to train smarter, recover faster, and perform at their best.

Remember, pelvic floor care is just another part of overall fitness - no different from strength, cardio, or flexibility. With awareness, knowledge, and the right coaching cues, you can make the "missing rep" a normal, essential part of every workout.

Your guidance can make a real difference - helping clients stay active, confident, and strong at every stage of life.

TENA provide products that are designed specifically for managing bladder weakness - liners, pads and pants for everyone and every need.

Our [Product Selector Tool](#) will help your clients select the product that's right for them and their body.

Further resources can be found on our [Facebook](#), [TikTok](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube channels](#), as well as on the [TENA website](#).





#EverySqueezeCounts

www.tena.co.uk