

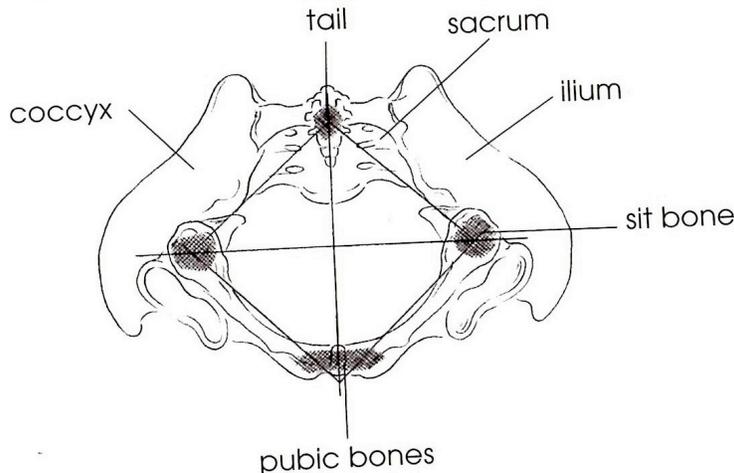
## FINDING YOUR PELVIC FLOOR

### **Awareness: “Am I relaxed or am I gripping?”**

#### *Bring your awareness to your perineum.*

The first step towards relaxing your pelvic floor (PF) is learning where it is and how to feel it. Try these things:

**Sit** on a firm chair. Sit up straight, but not in a “military” way. Feel your “sit bones” under your left and right buttocks. Notice your pubic bone in the front and your tailbone (coccyx) at the tip of your spine in the back. These are the 4 bony ‘corners’ of your perineum.



[Franklin, Eric. *Pelvic Power*. Elysian Editions Princeton Book Company, 2002.]

**Rock** side-to-side and front-to-back to find these bones. Circle around these bones by rocking your pelvis in a circle. The PF muscles are within this area. We have 3 organs that live there too and are supported by these muscles. The bladder sits in the front, the rectum is in back, and in women the uterus and vagina take up space in the middle. In men, the prostate lies just beneath the bladder.

**Ask** yourself, “Am I relaxed?” If you are relaxed, you should feel your PF muscles resting comfortably inside your clothes.

**Touch** your pubic bone, or even your perineal muscles (by placing your hand over your labias) if you need more feedback to feel these muscles.

**Squeeze** with moderate vigour to contract your PF muscles; then relax. First you will feel your muscles tighten and **close**, as if the urethra, anus, and vagina were closing shut. Then you should feel the muscles **lift up** as you squeeze a little harder. Finally, you want to feel them **relax down** as you release. Pretend your PF was an elevator and your squeezing makes the elevator go up, relaxing makes it go down.

**Repeat** this technique several times a day until you don’t need to squeeze/release, but are able to merely “feel” yourself let go easily. We call this the “**PELVIC DROP EXERCISE.**” For some people, it takes a while to learn. It is the **OPPOSITE** of a “Kegel.”

*The normal resting state for the PF is a relaxed state—the muscles are not overly gripped or lifted. They are flexible, yet there is inherent strength to keep our*

*spines aligned, our organs in place, and to keep us continent. **In short, there is a balance between power and flexibility. We are long AND strong.***

*“Lay an egg.”*

If you are not able to relax, or are having trouble feeling yourself squeeze and release, then try this: Gently (and I mean gently) try to bulge your PF by pretending you are laying a tiny egg as you exhale softly through pursed lips.

Practice this a few times in a row to train your muscles to “let go.” BUT, don’t get into the habit of bulging. You want to learn to just naturally “let go” or “drop” those muscles without needing to bulge.

*Use your breath to help you feel your perineum.*

**Belly Breathe.** This means inhale through the nose, feeling your belly and lower ribs expand; exhale through your mouth or through pursed lips, feeling your belly flatten. Try to avoid chest breathing, as this is an inefficient breath pattern for you.

Feel the gentle increase in pressure in your PF as you breathe in, and try to keep your PF muscles relaxed as you exhale. Let your breath help support your PF relaxation.

If you feel tension anywhere else in your body, try and relax there too.