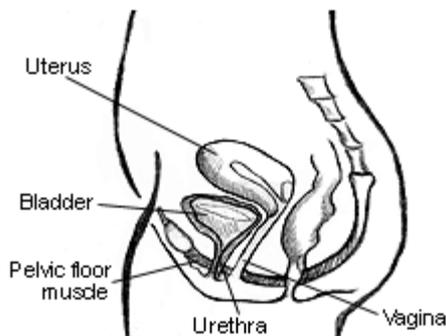


## USING VAGINAL BALLS

### Inserting Vaginal Balls

Use a small amount of water-based lubricant on both the balls to help insertion- avoid using too much as this will make the balls slippery and harder to hold in place. **When using duo balls, insert the ball furthest from the removal loop first.** Because of the link between the two balls, once the first is inserted the vaginal muscles may try to push it out before you can insert the second. To avoid this, try to lie on your back or put your pelvis up so that gravity can assist you. Alternatively, some women find that standing, with one foot on a chair, works better for them - similar to inserting a tampon. If you have a prolapse of any type that sits at the vaginal opening, you will not find balls useful or comfortable as your prolapse may prevent you from inserting the balls to sit where they make the pelvic floor muscles work.



### Positioning Vaginal Balls

When using a single vaginal ball, insert it so that its lower edge is at least 2cm inside you. If using duo balls, the lower edge of the lower ball is at least 2cm inside you. To act as a weight that stimulates the pelvic floor muscles to contract, the lowest point of the lower ball must be inserted far enough that it sits just **above** the muscles- it therefore needs to sit at the approximate point where the line pointing to the vagina ends in the picture at left. The correct distance can vary between women, but it should be pushed in a similar distance to how you would normally use a tampon. When using duo balls, the ball furthest from the removal loop will move further into the vagina as the second ball is pushed in. Leave the loop outside the vagina just like you would a tampon as this is used to remove the balls. Joyballs removal loop sits just within the vagina.

### Vaginal Balls in use

Like any new product, the balls may feel slightly uncomfortable at first, but this is usually only because they are a new sensation for your body and you tend to be extremely "aware" of them. This sensation also provides feedback to you about your pelvic floor muscles. You can also try squeezing the ball/s to hold them in your vagina - this is a pelvic floor contraction. If you squeeze and they slide out then you are performing the wrong action - you should feel as if you are trying to 'lift' the balls inside, not push them out.

Depending on the strength of your pelvic floor muscles, you may find the balls tend to slip out when you first use them. If this happens, be patient and persist with the program - see the hints for use below. As the muscles become stronger, they should naturally hold the balls in place, even during physical exertion and whilst coughing and sneezing. You may find initially that you can only hold them in place for a few minutes. This is fine - you will increase the strength and endurance of your muscles as you use your balls regularly.

If you find you are unable to hold the balls in place at all, first check that you are inserting them correctly and that you are not using too much lubricant (which will make them very slippery). If they are correctly positioned and you still have problems holding them in you can either:

- Try using them lying on your back with knees bent. Try to gently squeeze and "lift" the balls. In this position you are eliminating gravity. Hold for 2-3 seconds, relax and rest for 10 seconds and then repeat up to 10 times.
- Progress to gently pulling on the removal loop as if to pull the balls out but use your pelvic floor muscles to hold them in. Repeat as above.
- Once you are feeling more confident, progress to standing again and see if you can hold the ball in whilst upright.
- If you can't hold them after trying the above, please see a pelvic floor physio or your doctor for an assessment.

When you walk, the motion causes the ball inside the balls to move, creating the silent vibration which can be felt by the pelvic floor muscles and can stimulate them to contract. This is also the sensation described for the pleasurable use of vaginal balls for which they were first invented (Geisha balls). Most women can do normal activities whilst using vaginal balls but some say they find it less comfortable to sit when wearing them, depending on individual anatomy (vaginal length, position of uterus etc.). It is generally not beneficial to use vaginal balls (or any vaginal weights) whilst sitting, as muscle strengthening develops from:

- stimulation created by the presence of the balls which occurs during movement
- automatic contraction of the muscles as they try to hold the balls in place against the effect of gravity whilst you are standing and moving around. This is how your pelvic floor should work - gently contracting to support your pelvic organs when you are upright
- doing some stronger pelvic floor contractions using the ball/s as resistance or weights. This helps you develop the strength to hold against coughs and sneezes.

### **Two ways of using your vaginal balls to train your pelvic floor:**

1. Whilst the manufacturers state that you can use balls "without the need for doing squeeze and lift exercises", they actually work more effectively if you also do some pelvic floor exercises (squeeze and lift) whilst wearing them. Having the balls in the vagina also gives you feedback and something to feel as you squeeze and lift.
2. Wearing the balls and walking around for up to 20 minutes is enough to help develop endurance. However, just like other muscles, the pelvic floor will fatigue and tire if you try to work them continuously without a break. Don't leave the balls in for long periods –build up to this gradually as you are able. Trying to hold them in too long can in some cases, cause over activity in the pelvic floor which may lead to pain.

### **The suggested routine is:**

- ✓ Start by standing still and firstly relaxing your pelvic floor as far as you can without the balls slipping out.
- ✓ Next, try to gently lift the ball/s inside your vagina hold for a count of 2-3 and slowly lower down again.
- ✓ Rest for 5 -10 seconds and then repeat up to 10 times
- ✓ Once you can do this, gradually increase the time of holding , working up to 10 seconds
- ✓ Always rest in between to allow the muscles to recover from these stronger squeezes.
- ✓ Also try progressing to holding the ball/s in whilst lifting the washing basket, making the bed etc which will help you develop the habit of tightening the pelvic floor when you do actions that put stress or pressure downwards on your pelvic floor which is what leads to episodes of leaking (known as Stress Urinary Incontinence or SUI)
- ✓ If you do leak eg with a cough, try holding the balls in and coughing – they will give you the feedback for holding when coughing- if you don't they will slide out from the force of the cough. Some women may not develop the strength to fully hold them in during a cough – what is more important is learning the technique of quickly contracting just prior to a cough as this helps to prevent leaks and supports your pelvic organs.

This ensures you work the pelvic floor muscles in sets for strengthening and with longer more gentle holds for endurance training. Your pelvic floor needs training in both.

When you have finished your workout, the balls are removed by slowly pulling on the loop. They should then be cleaned with soap and water and dried. If you are unsure about how to use vaginal balls, or if you experience no improvement after using them for 12 weeks, you should consult your health practitioner or a women's health physiotherapist.

**IF AT ANY TIME YOU DEVELOP PAIN WHILST USING YOUR VAGINAL BALLS CEASE USE AND CONSULT YOUR MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL.**

**IF YOU DO NOT FEEL YOU HAVE PROGRESSED WITH YOUR PROGRAM AFTER 12 WEEKS PLEASE SEEK ADVICE FROM A WOMEN'S HEALTH PHYSIOTHERAPIST OR YOUR MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL**

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