



INFORMATION SHEET : AQUAFLEX PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISE SYSTEM

- Vaginal cones act as a “weight” in the vagina and therefore can strengthen the muscles through the automatic contraction that occurs to hold them in place (Glavind 2001).
- Vaginal cones can also be used to provide resistance for the pelvic floor muscles in an exercise program.
- Whilst the instruction booklet says you can just insert the weighted cones and automatically workout the muscles "without the need for doing squeeze and lift exercises" they actually work more effectively if you do some pelvic floor exercises (squeeze and lift) whilst wearing them .Modern research principles and clinical experience indicate that you will get a much better response if you use the weighted cones whilst you do your exercises. In other words - insert and do your squeeze and lift, drop and relax.
- If you leave the cone in for extended periods of time the pelvic floor muscles, just like other muscles, will fatigue and tire if you try to work them continuously without a break.
- It is important that you teach your pelvic floor muscles to relax as well as to contract, rather than constantly clench.

However, you wouldn't go to the gym and hold a weight above your head for 30 minutes, you would do sets of lifts with rests between.

- ✓ This can be done progressively by standing still and firstly relaxing your pelvic floor as far as you can without the cones slipping out.
- ✓ Next, try to gently lift the cone inside your vagina hold for a count of 3-5 s9 or whilst you take a slow breath in and out) 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 or 3-4 breaths (as this prevents you holding your breath when counting!)
- ✓ Always rest in between to allow the muscles to recover from these stronger squeezes.
- ✓ Aim for 3 sets and then remove the cone. Once a day is optimal.
- ✓ Also try progressing to holding the cone 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) or pressure on prolapsing pelvic organs

Vaginal Cones in use

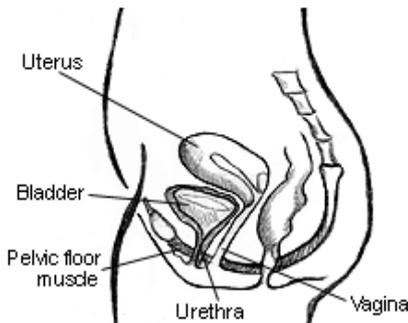
Like any new product, the cone may feel slightly uncomfortable at first, but this is usually only because it is a new sensation for your body and you tend to be extremely “aware” of it. This sensation also provides feedback to you about your pelvic floor muscles . You can also try squeezing the cone to hold it in your vagina – this is a pelvic floor contraction. If you squeeze and it slides out then you are performing the wrong action – you should feel as if you are trying to “lift ` the cone inside, not push it out. It can help to gently breathe OUT as you tighten and lift.

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



Positioning Vaginal Cones

- Start with the largest cone, empty.
- The correct distance can vary between women, but it should be pushed in a similar distance to how you would normally use a tampon. Be sure that you leave the string outside the vagina, as you will need it to remove the cone (just like you would remove a tampon)
- To act as a weight that stimulates the pelvic floor muscle to contract, the lowest point of the cone must be inserted far enough that it sits **above** the pelvic floor muscles- about where the line pointing to the vagina ends in the picture below.



The Cone won't stay in

- check that you are inserting it correctly and that you are not using too much lubricant (which will make it very slippery).
- Try using it laying on your back with knees bent. Gently squeeze and "lift" the cone. In this position you are eliminating gravity. Hold for 3-5 seconds , relax rest for 5 seconds and then repeat up to 10 times.
- Progress to gently pulling on the removal string as if trying to pull it out but use your pelvic floor muscles to hold it in . Repeat as above.
- Once you are feeling more confident , progress to standing again and see if you can retain the cone in the upright position.

It is not as beneficial to use vaginal cones (or any vaginal weights) whilst sitting, as muscle strengthening develops from :

- stimulation created by the presence of the cone which only occurs during movement
- automatic contraction of the muscles as they try to hold the cone 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 cone as resistance or weight. This helps you develop the strength to hold against coughs and sneezes.

Removal and care

- Remove cone by slowly pulling on the string, just like taking out a tampon. It should
- Clean with soap and water, dry and store in the container supplied.

If you are unsure about how to use vaginal cones, it causes pain or worsening of your symptoms, or if you experience no improvement after using them for 12 weeks, you should consult your health practitioner or a women's health physiotherapist.

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