

Exercises to Prepare for Childbirth

Kegel: (Improves tone of perineal muscles)

- Tighten the pelvic floor muscles as if you were stopping the flow of urine. Hold for a few seconds and release. Do this exercise 10 times a day in sets of 5-10 repetitions each time.
- Variation 1: Slowly tighten the pelvic floor muscles upward from the base to the top of the vagina, as if slowly moving up in an elevator, then slowly release the muscles.
- Variation 2: Tighten the pelvic floor muscles and hold for 45 seconds or longer; relax. Repeat 2-3 times, twice a day.

Tailor Press: (Stretches and improves tone of inner thigh muscles)

- Sit in the tailor position, with soles of feet placed together.
- Place your hands on your ankles, lean forward until you feel the stretch in your thighs, while holding your chin up and back straight. Hold for 20-30 seconds. Let knees fall gently toward the floor but do not bounce knees.
- Repeat 3-4 times per day.

Pelvic Tilt

- Get on all four's in a hands-and-knees position. Keep your back straight and in a relaxed position. Then tuck buttock muscles inward and tighten abdominal muscles. This will tilt the pelvis girdle forward as you arch your back upward.
- Hold to a count of 5, then relax and return to original position. Don't let your back sway downward.
- Repeat 10 times per day.
- Variation: Try standing with your back against a wall, your knees slightly bent, and your feet about a foot away from the wall. Tighten your abdomen and press the small of your back flat against the wall. Hold for a count of 5 and then relax.

Squatting

- Hold onto a sturdy chair or your partner for support, or stand with your back firmly against a wall.
- With your feet wide apart, squat down slightly. Your heels should remain flat on the ground.
- Hold this position for several seconds with contracted thighs and abdominal muscles while relaxing all other muscles.
- Return to standing position.
- Repeat 5-6 times per day.