

Your Sex Questions Answered! How Do Kegel Balls Work?



Ever found yourself wondering how to introduce a new sex act to your partner, or how to have orgasms that really hit the spot? If so, you've come to the right place! The Center for Sexual Pleasure and Health will be publishing a monthly question and answer series for all your sex and sexuality-related inquiries. From sex toys to fantasies to safer sex, we'll be doling out advice to keep your bedroom romps fresh and your inner sex kitten purring.

Question: I keep hearing about kegel balls/ben wa balls that are supposed to make me tighter down there. Do they work? What do they do?

Excellent question! Kegel balls, or ben wa balls, are a type of tool you can use to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. We'd go beyond that, however, and even call them a toy because the effects they can have include tons of jiggy orgasmic feelings, and they're a minimal effort exerciser. Even if going to the gym sounds like a total pain to you, Kegel balls facilitate a kind of exercise that'll certainly help you gain ground in the bedroom, among other handy health benefits. But first, let's start with the basics.

What are Kegels?

Your Kegel muscle is the muscle found along your pelvic floor, also known by its official name, the pubococcygeneus (PC) muscle. Have you ever had to pee really, really badly, but there isn't a bathroom or suitable bush in sight? The PC muscle is what you're clenching in order to stop urination. Bet you never thought you'd learn scientific terminology for "holding it in"! That squeezing motion is also the basis of all Kegel exercises, which rely on repeated contraction and release in order to grow stronger.

What can Kegel exercises help me with?

Although Kegel exercisers tend to be marketed primarily toward those with vaginas, everyone can do them, regardless of genitalia. Healthcare professionals recommend Kegel exercises for a variety of different health benefits. Strengthening the Kegel muscle can help treat urinary incontinence, prevent vaginal prolapse, speed up vaginal recovery post-pregnancy, and treat inflammations in the prostate gland.

However, even without pre-existing medical conditions, there isn't a wrong reason to try them out. Try squeezing your pelvic muscles and holding that tension for three seconds, and then relaxing for three seconds. Repeating this exercise 10 to 15 times per session, over three to four sessions a day, is the typical recommendation, and you can multitask by doing your exercises while in class, on the subway, at your desk, or anywhere else, with complete discreetness.

In addition to medical benefits, Kegel exercises also can have a powerful effect on your sex life! You may notice while doing Kegel exercises that the tightening motion is very similar to contractions that occur in the body during climax: stronger Kegels make for stronger contractions, and often ramp up the explosive potential of orgasms - quite the reward with very little effort required on your part!

Furthermore, while Kegel exercises will not make the vagina tighter, they do allow for greater control of the vaginal muscles.

Strengthening your Kegel muscle can also help give you better control of orgasms and ejaculation, which is why we recommend them as a basic tool to address premature ejaculation, erectile dysfunction and difficulties orgasming in general.

Painless, effortless and incredibly beneficial, these exercises are some of the easiest ways to increase sexual pleasure without tremendous cost or risk.

Where do these balls come in, then?

Although you can do Kegel exercises on your own without any tools, Kegel balls are helpful because they don't require any concentration or forethought - no need to count sets or seconds, much less remember to do them at all. These useful balls directly stimulate the Kegel muscle, which is especially helpful for those who have difficulty isolating their Kegel muscle, which forgoes much of the benefits.

Kegel balls are body-safe hollow balls with tiny weights inside of them that are inserted into the vagina and left there. Once they're resting inside of you, the weights will bounce around, and the kegel muscle will involuntarily contract as a result of this movement. While it may sound daunting, it is actually quite effortless, as the contractions are not uncomfortable, and you might find yourself wanting to wear them out and about all day. They'll just be your little secret when you hand documents to your boss or stand on an escalator - your jiggly, orgasmic little secret.

When inserting Kegel balls, particularly for the first time, it helps to lie down with your legs relaxed. Apply an ample amount of lubricant to the balls (preferably water-based, as silicone lubes could break down your Kegel balls if they are also made of silicone), and slide them in one by one at a speed that is comfortable for you. If you feel pain during insertion, but don't normally have pain during other kinds of penetration, try masturbating for a little bit beforehand to warm yourself up, especially if your Kegel balls are quite sizeable. Push them upward, similarly to how you might push in a tampon, as far as they will go comfortably. Once they're in, just stand up and go about your business.

Where can I get my hands on them?!

There are so many different varieties of Kegel balls out there, it can be overwhelming to choose. Some are sets of balls attached by a string, some are made of metal or glass, and they come in a variety of weights and sizes. This is where the distinction between 'ben wa balls' and 'Kegel balls' becomes relevant, as 'Kegel balls' typically refer to larger balls with a string, encased in hard plastic or medical grade silicone, but both exercisers are effectively the same.

With all types, your top priority should be making sure they're body safe, since you're going to be putting them in and out of yourself on a regular basis. You should ensure the materials are non-porous: avoid rubber and jelly, and lean toward silicone, glass and metal. Make sure the string is not a braided cloth string, which quickly turns into a very nasty bacteria trap. If it has a string, it should be completely silicone coated.

In terms of size and weights, it comes down to what you feel is the most comfortable for you. Many manufacturers sell sets of Kegel balls with a gradation of different weights, so that you can get used to keeping the lighter ones in before you move to the heavier ones. The heavier the ball, the more effort is needed to keep it in, and the more of a work-out your vagina will get. It's recommended that beginners try wearing Kegel balls for half an hour, three times a week. Like with weights, you can increase the time as your vagina masters your current difficulty level.

The JeJoue Ami, Lelo Luna Beads and The Adult Toy Shop's Velvet Kegel Exercisers are some great examples. Of those, Luna and The Adult Toy Shop's Kegel balls also feature interchangeable ball weights, so that you can use the same basic harness system to mix and match weights until you find what works for you. If you have a shortened vagina, you may find that solo models, which incorporate only a single ball, fit more comfortably. All three of the above sets have solo options. Duo models are also typical. We love Fun Factory's SmartBalls for their jiggle factor. While some models are specifically recommended for post-childbirth bodies, the reality is that any of these Kegel sets can be used in any vagina they feel comfortable in, regardless of your childbearing status.

We're also excited about the Aneros Peridise, the first unisex Kegel exerciser available for all bodies! This tool is inserted anally and held with the same Kegel movements. (Please note that you should not put Kegel balls into the anus! Vaginal Kegel balls are not anus-friendly, as they lack any kind of flared base, which means that they will get stuck in there ... and you will have to wobble-wobble your way to the ER and explain yourself.)

What else should I know?

It's not unheard of for people to orgasm just from having their Kegel balls in and moving around because they are just that awesome. Jumping up and down, running and riding a car or bus can all add to that delightful 'jiggle factor' that makes your Kegel muscle contract like you've just had a quickie instead of a typical work commute. There are lots of things you can do with Kegel balls inserted. Try keeping them in while you stimulate your clitoris, or using the anal exerciser while masturbating.

Finally, don't confine your Kegel exercises to pre-coital activities alone. Try actively doing them while having sex, and see how that feels. It's a great way to spice up one's genital repertoire. From a tightening, pulsating vagina to a stronger, harder erection, Kegel exercises might be just what the sex doctor ordered.

This month's column is by staff members Gypsy Vidal and Yvonne Yu. Email your pressing sex questions to sex@motifri.com, where they will be kept confidential!