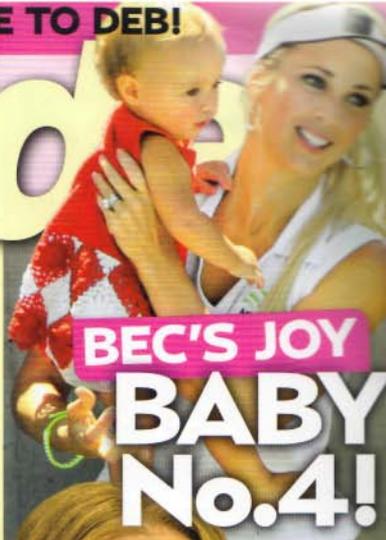
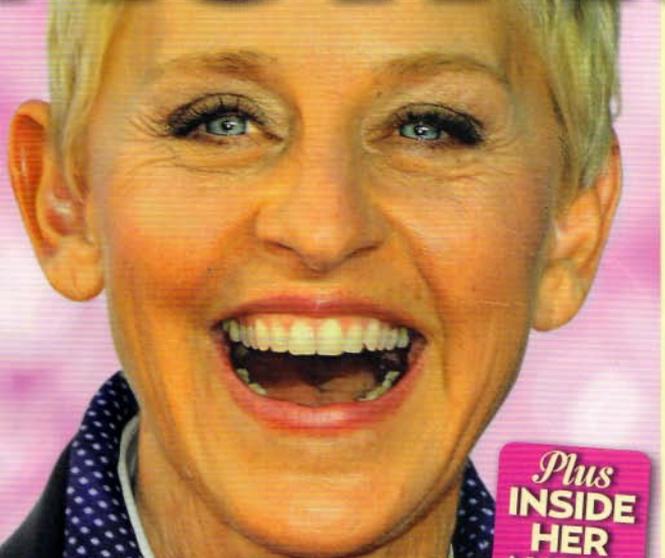


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# New Idea



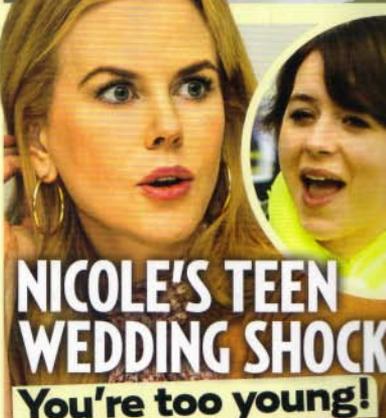
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3-20 IN-COUSTY January 26, 2013

# THE ONE MUSCLE you should work out!

You don't need to hit the gym for this vital exercise...

**W**hile most of us are busy doing crunches or tricep dips to tone up, one group of muscles is often ignored – with consequences that can include a lacklustre sex life, bad back or even a misbehaving bladder!

Physiotherapist Jason T. Smith, author of *Get Yourself Back in Motion* (www.backinmotion.com.au, \$34.95), warns we mustn't neglect our pelvic floor muscles.

## WHAT IS THE PELVIC FLOOR?

'The pelvic floor is a group of muscles that form a sling from the front of the pelvis through to the tailbone, and act as the bottom support for the pelvic organs – the bladder, the uterus for females and the bottom parts of the bowel, as well as assisting with sexual arousal and performance,' Jason explains.

'In a healthy person those muscles contract regularly throughout the day, but once they're damaged, they go into a mode of dysfunction, which can lead to lack of sexual arousal or painful sex, erectile dysfunction or stress incontinence, when the bladder leaks with even small pressure changes like coughing, sneezing, laughing or jumping.

'Causes include vaginal childbirth and simply carrying a baby in general. Obesity also puts a constant load on the pelvic floor and an enlarged prostate in males, impact trauma, surgery, spinal postural problems and high-impact sports can play a part.'

## PELVIC FLOOR ACTION PLAN

Prevention is better than cure – so follow Jason's tips to keep your pelvic floor healthy. He advises:

- Follow a daily exercise routine – especially if you are at high risk due to pregnancy, having had a child or are over 65.
- Exercises such as Pilates, which helps with core stability and pelvic control, can have a positive long-term impact on your sex life and bladder health.
- Eat a diet high in fibre – especially green leafy vegetables, wholegrains and a natural fibre supplement – to assist in keeping the pelvic organs light and minimise pain and dysfunction.
- Stay well hydrated. Most people with bladder issues avoid water but this can irritate the bladder and create urge incontinence (constantly feeling the need to urinate even when the bladder isn't full) and other problems.

If you're experiencing any symptoms see a physiotherapist, who can give you an assessment and diagnosis of how the pelvic floor became dysfunctional and explain how it works.

## Did you know?

Jason says 60 to 70 per cent of people suffering pelvic dysfunction can be cured with a proper assessment, good education and exercise routine. 'We want people to understand that they're actually in the majority if they have these problems, and if they address it early they can get some great results,' he adds. 'It's a travesty so many people are suffering in silence.'

## Flex that muscle!

According to Jason, pelvic floor holds are the most effective way to build strength, endurance and tone up your pelvic floor muscles.

Here's how...

Imagine you're tightening your bottom cheeks and your stomach at the same time, so you can feel a lifting of that sling under your pelvis. Hold for five to 10 seconds. Repeat five to 10 times. Do this sequence three times

a day – it's like lifting weights to tone your shoulders.

If you're struggling to locate your pelvic floor, practise on the toilet by trying to stop your urine mid-flow – those are the muscles you should be working. Once you're familiar with the sensation, stop doing midstream holds, as this can lead to urine retention issues.

'I advise people on doing their exercises while sitting at their desk, in the car, at the traffic lights – trying to hold their pelvic floor until the lights turn green – or watching TV,' Jason says.



Working out your pelvic floor muscles can help you look and feel sexy. So what are you waiting for?