

Pelvic Floor-The Baked Bean Can Connection!

Well where do we start with the pelvic floor?! Many people simply think it is an area that must be trained in post-natal women- which indeed it does **BUT** it is also a key component of our deep core so needs to be trained by everyone. There is also a group of people that may need to consider how they get their pelvic floor muscles to relax as they can be switched on too much. (hypertonic)

Pelvic Floor Muscles are active throughout life, 24 hours a day.

They form a dynamic platform which functions like a trampoline at the base of the pelvis to contain the pelvic and abdominal organs, preventing prolapse and assisting in the maintenance of continence.

Basically, the pelvic floor sits at the bottom of the pelvis and stops everything falling out! Unless of course you need things to come out of the body and it helps regulate that too.

It is just as important in Men and Women

1 in 3 women

1 in 10 men

over the age of 18 experience pelvic floor issues. **Wow that makes it a big deal.**

So why the baked bean can connection. Well it gives you a straightforward way to visualise the role of your pelvic floor muscles. Think of the pelvic floor muscles as being the base of a baked bean can; the abdominals form the front and side of the can; the back muscles and supporting fascia form the back of the can; the diaphragm (large breath muscle) forms the top of the can.



To keep the can in its lovely stable shape all the parts must work together; so, if there was an issue with the base the can would lose its shape and potentially lose its contents! The same applies to our core connections through pelvic floor.

This can lead to many problems such as leaking when coughing, running and laughing.

Internal organs can lose their support structure causing them to be drawn down by gravity

leading to prolapses. Pregnancy, birthing, abdominal surgery and obesity all put the system under pressure.

Ageing can lead to problems later in life when the collagen connections start to become less robust; men often suffer as they age whereas women can struggle much earlier due to childbirth and hormone issues.

So what can we do about it?

Well the good news is that pelvic floor exercise has been shown to be a positive intervention. I think many people get shy or embarrassed when talking about the pelvic floor. But realistically it is something we all have and all need to train to maintain optimum function for as long as possible.

In its simplest terms the muscle activity specific to the pelvic floor is a lift-and-squeeze movement, as if you are trying to stop the midstream flow of urine or the passage of wind. There are lots of dynamic exercise that you can also do to help wake up and strengthen this muscle group. In our Pilates sessions we will always cue the pelvic floor connection- so really try to focus on it next time you're in class and ask your instructor if you need help.

Jump onto our **FREE Pelvic Floor Challenge** or if you'd like to know more and get a deeper understanding and a periodised pelvic floor programme then book onto our specialist **Pelvic Floor Workshop**.