DO THE WORKOUT
Hover your phone's camera over the smart code to do the full pelvic floor workout created by Ife.

IF YOUR CORE IS THE foundation of your strength, the pelvic floor is the first brick of that foundation. Your pelvic floor is composed of the muscles that run from your pubic bone to your tailbone and from sit bone to sit bone. These muscles control everything from stabilizing your core and supporting your organs to having an orgasm and releasing your bowels. But over time, your pelvic floor can weaken, says Ife Obi (shown here), a certified Pilates instructor and founder of the Fit In, a Pilates, barre, and strength studio in Brooklyn, New York.

"Pregnancy, giving birth, lifting heavy things off the ground, menopause, and fibroids all have an impact on our pelvic floor muscles," Obi explains. Strengthening them can help prevent dysfunction as you get older.

You probably know that Kegels are a good way to engage pelvic floor muscles, pulling them up and in. Mimicking holding your pee tackles the tailbone and pubic bone muscles, while pretending to stop gas will target the rectal muscles (which go across the sitting bones). "Having control of your pelvic floor muscles means knowing when to tighten, but also when to relax," Obi says. If those muscles remain tense, it can lead to discomfort, especially during sex or while going to the bathroom.

And there may be no better way to fortify and release the pelvic floor muscles than with Pilates. Both the exercises and general principles (like breath, concentration, and precision) will help you gain control. Designed by Obi, this routine will give your pelvic floor the TLC it needs, while also working your core, glutes, and hamstrings. Read on for a snapshot of these strengthening moves.



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Flat Back Hinge

Sit on the ground with legs extended in front of you with feet hip-distance apart and hands behind head. Keep pelvis in a neutral position while squeezing the muscles surrounding your sit bones and bracing core. Then, inhale as you hinge torso back until you feel the tension in the abs, keeping your back flat the entire time. Contract pelvic floor muscles and hold for 3 counts, then exhale and return to starting position. Do 10 reps.

Top: Craft; sports bra: Alwrld; leggings: Onzie; sneakers: Asics

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