



(RG Stone, 2024)

INTRODUCTION

- Urinary incontinence (UI) is the involuntary leakage of urine. This common and often distressing condition significantly affects a woman's quality of life, self-esteem, and daily functioning (AlQuaiz et al, 2023).
- Postpartum urinary incontinence frequently occurs due to pelvic floor muscle weakening during pregnancy and childbirth, particularly following vaginal delivery (Soave et al, 2019).
- Pelvic Floor Muscle Training (PFMT), often referred to as Kegel exercises, is a first-line, non-invasive intervention recommended to strengthen the pelvic muscles and improve bladder control (Cross, 2023).
- Regular and correctly performed PFMT has been shown to significantly reduce symptoms of stress and mixed urinary incontinence among postpartum women (Ayubi et al, 2024).
- The effectiveness of PFMT depends on several factors, such as exercise technique, frequency, duration, supervision, and individual adherence (Ayubi et al, 2024).

RESEARCH AIM, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTION

Aim:

To evaluate the effectiveness of postpartum pelvic floor exercises in reducing or managing urinary incontinence among women aged 20–40 in the UK.

Objectives:

- To comprehensively analyse and synthesise current evidence on the effectiveness of postpartum pelvic floor exercises in reducing urinary incontinence among UK women aged 20–40.
- To identify the most effective types, frequencies, and durations of pelvic floor exercises for improving urinary continence postpartum.
- To assess the quality and methodological rigour of studies investigating postpartum pelvic floor exercises in this population.
- To provide professional recommendations for healthcare practitioners, policymakers, and postpartum care programs based on the review findings.

Research Question:

How effective are postpartum pelvic floor exercises in preventing or reducing urinary incontinence among women aged 20–40 in the UK?

PREVALENCE OF URINARY INCONTINENCE

- According to the GOV.UK (2023), urinary incontinence affects approximately 1 in 7 women six months after childbirth in the UK, with higher rates observed among those who had vaginal deliveries.
- According to the GOV.UK (2023), approximately one in three women experiences some form of incontinence three months after childbirth; however, many do not seek medical help due to embarrassment or a lack of awareness.
- The NHS (2023) recommends pelvic floor exercises both during pregnancy and after childbirth as a key preventive and rehabilitative measure.
- Despite these recommendations, research shows low adherence and inconsistent engagement with PFMT programs among postpartum women (Harper et al, 2024).
- Urinary incontinence has substantial physical, emotional, and socioeconomic consequences, affecting women's mental well-being, relationships, and work participation (Frigerio et al, 2022).
- Strengthening the evidence base for effective postpartum interventions is crucial to support national health goals in maternal and women's health (Harper et al, 2024).



(San Bernardino, 2018)



(Pelvic Power, 2023)

RESEARCH IMPACT

- This research will help postpartum women aged 20–40 access evidence-based, effective exercise programs that reduce urinary incontinence, restore confidence, and improve physical and emotional well-being (Ryhtae et al, 2023).
- Findings will guide NHS and public health initiatives to design cost-effective, community-based PFMT programs that promote early postpartum rehabilitation and long-term maternal health (Yang et al, 2022).
- The study will provide evidence to inform national women's health and maternity policies, supporting the integration of structured PFMT education and follow-up into routine postpartum care (Hauwaert et al, 2025).
- The research will equip healthcare providers, such as midwives, physiotherapists, and nurses, with practical insights into delivering, supervising, and promoting adherence to PFMT programs (Shir, 2022).
- By raising awareness and reducing stigma around postpartum urinary incontinence, this study will encourage open discussions on maternal health and contribute to the academic evidence base on women's pelvic health in the UK (Lopes et al, 2025).

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

- Despite being common, postpartum urinary incontinence remains underdiagnosed and undertreated, partly due to stigma and lack of education (Cox et al, 2023).
- PFMT offers a safe, cost-effective, and non-invasive method to prevent or manage urinary incontinence, reducing the need for pharmacological or surgical treatments (Cox et al, 2023).
- Effective postpartum pelvic floor programs can enhance recovery, physical comfort, and quality of life for mothers (Hadizadeh-Talasaz et al, 2019).
- Strengthening postpartum care through evidence-based PFMT can contribute to national efforts to improve women's health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs (Viñaspre et al, 2021).
- Understanding the barriers and facilitators to PFMT adherence can inform more accessible and motivating interventions (Hadizadeh-Talasaz et al, 2019).

Reference list

- AlQuaiz, A.M., Kazi, A., AlYousefi, N., Alwatban, L., AlHabib, Y. and Turkistani, I., (2023), June. Urinary incontinence affects the quality of life and increases psychological distress and low self-esteem. In *Healthcare* (Vol. 11, No. 12, p. 1772). MDPI.
- Ayubi, N., Padmasari, D.F., Komaini, A., Putri, D.R.S., Syafawi, A., Mario, D.T., Gemaini, A., Ridwan, M., Daulay, D.A.A., Ming, J.W. and Prihanto, J.B., (2024). The effectiveness of pelvic floor muscle training on decreasing urinary incontinence in pregnant or postnatal women: A systematic review. *Retos: nuevas tendencias en educación física, deporte y recreación*, (54), pp.506-512.
- Cross, D., (2023). *Kegel exercises, pelvic floor muscle strength and resistance training: An exploratory pre-post intervention study of women experiencing stress urinary incontinence*. Charles Darwin University (Australia).
- Cox, J.M., Sánchez-Polán, M., Mota, P., Barakat, R. and Nagpal, T.S., (2023). A scoping review exploring stigma associated with postpartum urinary incontinence. *International urogynecology journal*, 34(9), pp.1997-2005.
- de Viñaspre, R.R., Garrido, A.E. and Alvarez, M.A., (2021). Training women's pelvic floor muscles during pregnancy and postpartum at primary health centers: a best practice implementation project. *JBI Evidence Implementation*, 19(3), pp.245-256.
- Frigerio, M., Barba, M., Cola, A., Braga, A., Celardo, A., Munno, G.M., Schettino, M.T., Vagnetti, P., De Simone, F., Di Lucia, A. and Grassini, G., (2022). Quality of life, psychological wellbeing, and sexuality in women with urinary incontinence—Where are we now: A narrative review. *Medicina*, 58(4), p.525.
- GOV. UK (2023), National pelvic health service to support women. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-pelvic-health-service-to-support-women>
- Harper, R.C., Armstrong, M., Sheppard, S., Stewart, C. and Clark, C.J., (2024). The Pelvic (floor) Reminders (to) Explore Perinatal (women's) Acceptability (of) Reminders (to) Exercise (PREPARE) study: protocol for a feasibility trial.
- Hadizadeh-Talasaz, Z., Sadeghi, R. and Khadivzadeh, T., (2019). Effect of pelvic floor muscle training on postpartum sexual function and quality of life: A systematic review and meta-analysis of clinical trials. *Taiwanese Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 58(6), pp.737-747.
- Lopes, F.D., Henriques, C., Lopes, M.D.S. and Mendes, I.M., (2025). Quality of life of women with urinary incontinence in the postpartum period: an integrative literature review. *Frontiers in Global Women's Health*, 6, p.1562572.
- NHS (2023), <https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/exercise/>
- Ryhtae, I., Axelin, A., Parisod, H., Holopainen, A. and Hamari, L., (2023). Effectiveness of exercise interventions on urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse in pregnant and postpartum women: Umbrella review and clinical guideline development. *JBI evidence implementation*, 21(4), pp.394-408.
- Shir, H.L., (2022). Antenatal Pelvic Floor Education: A Review of the Midwifery Role in Promoting Pelvic Floor Health.
- Soave, I., Scarani, S., Mallozzi, M., Nobili, F., Marci, R. and Caserta, D., (2019). Pelvic floor muscle training for prevention and treatment of urinary incontinence during pregnancy and after childbirth and its effect on urinary system and supportive structures assessed by objective measurement techniques. *Archives of gynecology and obstetrics*, 299(3), pp.609-623.
- Van Hauwaert, R., Tomé, A., de Almeida, R.P.P., Vilela, F., Coutinho, A.L., Alpoim, D., de Jesus, R.S.F. and Virga, E., (2025). Physical Exercise and Pelvic Floor Muscle Training: A Vital Tool in Mitigating Pelvic Floor Dysfunction During Pregnancy and Postpartum. *Global Innovations in Physical Education and Health*, pp.169-202.
- Yang, X., Zhang, A., Sayer, L., Bassett, S. and Woodward, S., (2022). The effectiveness of group-based pelvic floor muscle training in preventing and treating urinary incontinence for antenatal and postnatal women: a systematic review. *International urogynecology journal*, 33(6), pp.1407-1420.