

# ICN Pelvic Floor Relaxation Series

[www.icnetwork.org](http://www.icnetwork.org)

With the growing recognition that tight, hypertonic pelvic floor muscles are often contributing to, if not causing, bladder and pelvic pain, physical therapy has become a core component of IC care. Tight pelvic floor muscles trigger ischemia, restricting blood flow to the bladder, other organs and nerves. The goal of therapy is to restore proper muscle tone and circulation. Looking for a PT? [www.pelvicrehab.com](http://www.pelvicrehab.com) has an excellent list of therapists certified in pelvic health. Working with a physical therapist at least once is vital to identify which muscles are dysfunctional and to provide "hands on" care and suggestions. Physical therapy may require multiple visits over time to be the most effective.

## Mountain Pose

Deep breathing will directly relax the pelvic floor. Think of the way a cat sleeps. As they breathe in, their lower belly expands. To take a true deep breath, slowly inhale for a count of three seconds, allowing your lower belly to expand. Wait one second then slowly exhale for four to six seconds. Do a total of five repetitions several times a day, especially when you start your day.



## Happy Baby

The Happy Baby pose is basically the same position as the Prayer pose, only while lying on your back. Begin by laying on your back with your knees up and feet flat on the floor. Then bring your knees towards your chest and grab either your knees, ankles or toes. Hold the position, breathe deeply and try dropping your pelvic floor muscles, that same sensation when you first feel the need to urinate. Hold for a minute and then release.



## Cobbler Pose

The Cobbler pose will help to relax your inner thighs, including the adductor muscles and the groin muscles. This can be done either lying on your back or sitting on the floor. Begin with your feet on the floor and knees up and together, then gradually drop your knees to the side. Breathe slowly and relax. Don't force the position. Only move your legs until you feel a comfortable pull. If it hurts, you've pushed too far. Hold this position for one minute while breathing slowly and deeply. If you notice intense pain, you can position a pillow under that knee that to make it more comfortable. You can also do one leg at a time if necessary.

## Prayer Pose

The pelvic floor squat stretch, also known as the Prayer or Garland pose, directly relaxes your pelvic floor muscles. This can be done against the wall for stability. Your feet should be shoulder width apart. With your back straight, slowly squat down until your bottom is about six inches from the ground. Relax and breathe deeply, imagining your pelvic floor relaxing. If this is too difficult, try the Happy Baby pose instead! Hold this position for one minute while breathing slowly and deeply.



## Forward Bend

The forward stretch will help stretch your inner thighs and hamstrings. For comfort, you can position your hands on a chair or table. Begin with your feet wider than your shoulders, with your feet and toes pointing forward. Keep your back and knees straight as you bend over at your waist. Hold the position when you first feel a stretch for a minute. For a more intense stretch, bend one knee slightly for a minute then switch to the other side. In **“Breaking Through Chronic Pelvic Pain”**, Dr. Jerome Weiss tells patients to NOT overstretch this position if you are also struggling with pudendal neuralgia. This pose could stretch those sensitive nerves.



## Warrior II

The front of the thigh often becomes very tight during painful flares. A lunge position will relax the both quadriceps and hip flexors. Start first with a small mini lunge. Standing near a wall, place your hands on your hips and your feet together. Step forward into a lung position that is comfortable for you, keeping your feet pointing forward and your hips facing forward. You can place your hands on your hips (Warrior 1 position) or extend your arms to the front and back (Warrior 2 position).



## Supine 4

It is important to relax the glute muscles that cushion your toosh because important nerves for the bladder pass through these muscles. Tight muscles can impair and/or irritate these nerves. For this stretch, lay on your back with your knees up and your feet flat on the floor. Place one ankle over the opposite knee. Place your hands on your bent knee, then slowly contract your abdomen and roll your knees towards your chest. If you can't get your ankle to your knee, just cross your knees instead and make the same motion. Hold this position for one minute while breathing slowly and deeply. Then return to your starting position and switch to the opposite side.

## Cobra Pose

The cobra stretch relaxes the abdominal muscles. If these muscles are tight, they can put pressure on your bladder. To do this stretch, lay down on the floor and place both hands in a push up position. Then, slowly extend your arms, lifting your head and chest while keeping your pelvis on the ground. You will feel a pull in your abdominal muscles. If this is too rigorous, just move up to your elbows. Hold this position for one minute while breathing slowly and deeply.

