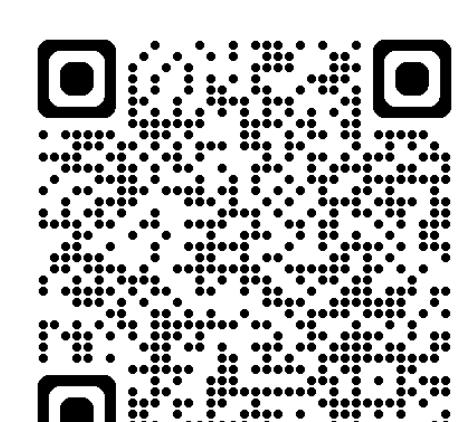


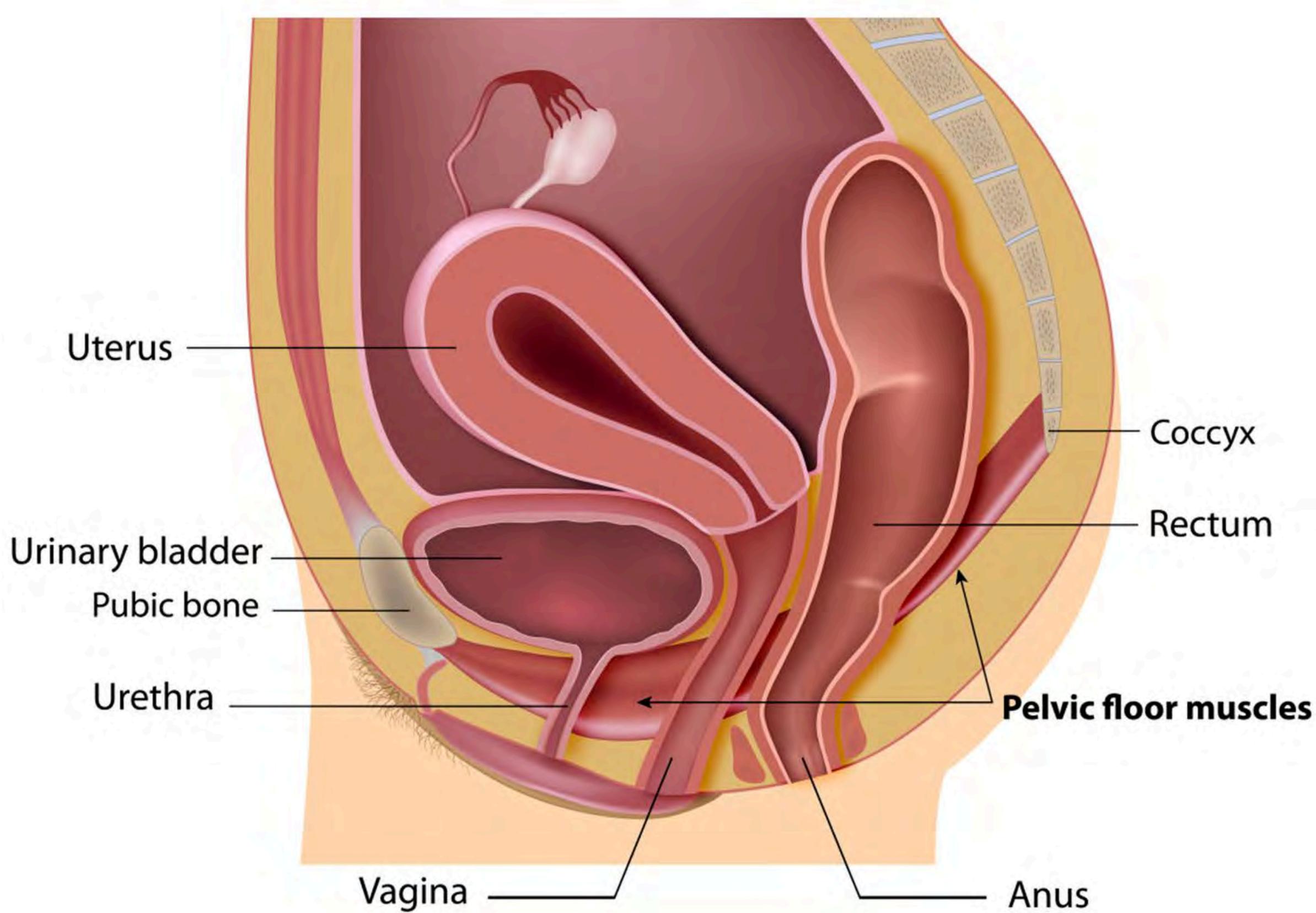
Self release of the pelvic floor



Following assessment, your physiotherapist may guide you to work on certain techniques to promote pelvic floor relaxation.

An important stage in improving symptoms is recognising when the pelvic floor muscles are tight, knowing how to enable them to release, and to acknowledge when they are relaxed.

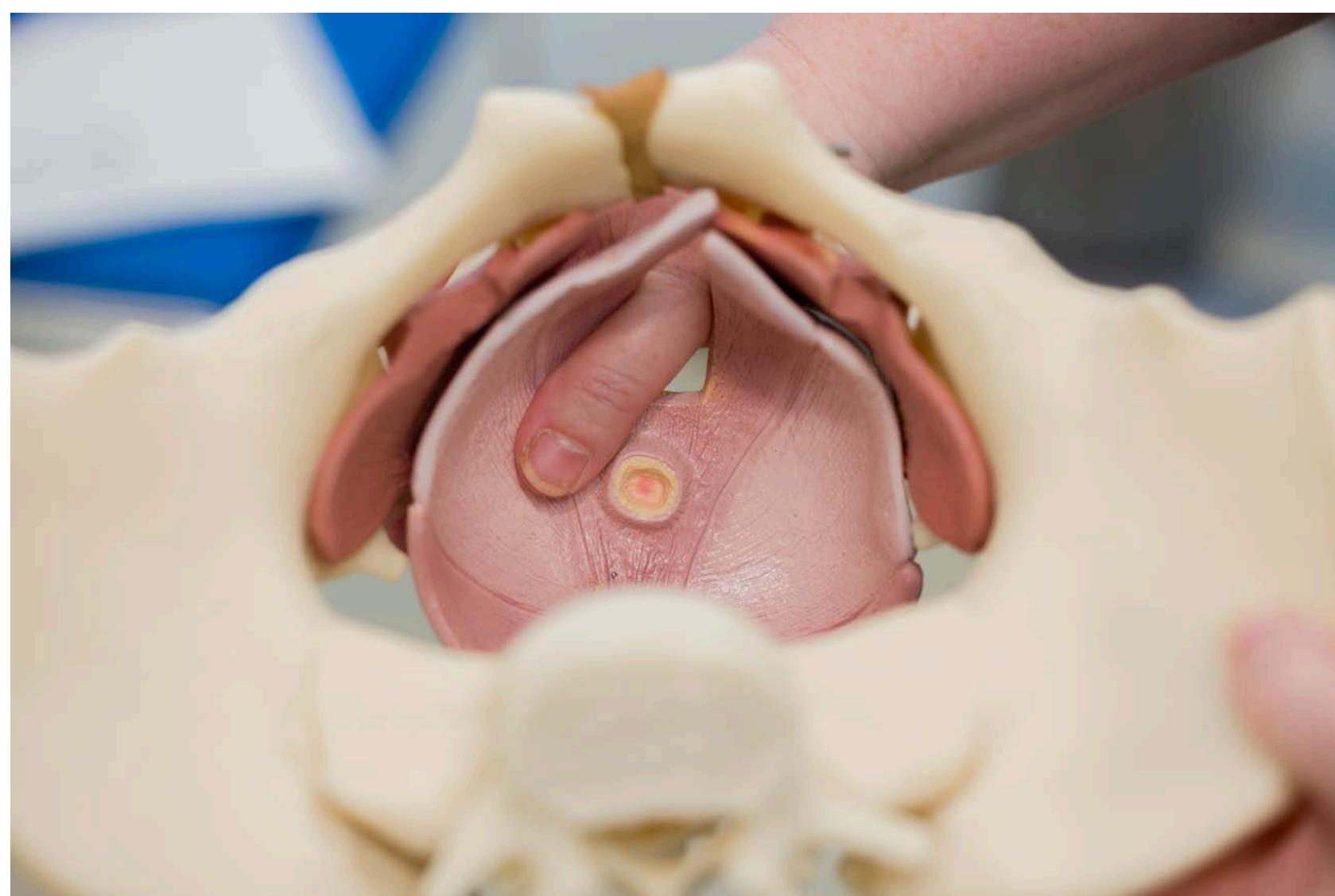
The pelvic floor muscles form a hammock underneath your pelvis to provide support and control for your bladder and bowel. The muscles attach to your pubic bone at the front, then span backwards to your coccyx (tailbone) and outwards to your sitting bones.





This leaflet describes a few techniques which can be used to encourage pelvic floor relaxation. The techniques can be done skin to skin – there is no need to use gloves. To enable good movement on the tissues, a good quality lubricant is recommended. This should be free of parabens, glycerines, glycols, alcohol, and perfume.

Find a quiet, private time and space where you can focus on what you are doing. Practicing deep breathing exercises can be a useful idea before working on the techniques to enable the pelvis and body to be receptive. Choose a position which is the most comfortable for you and provides the easiest access.

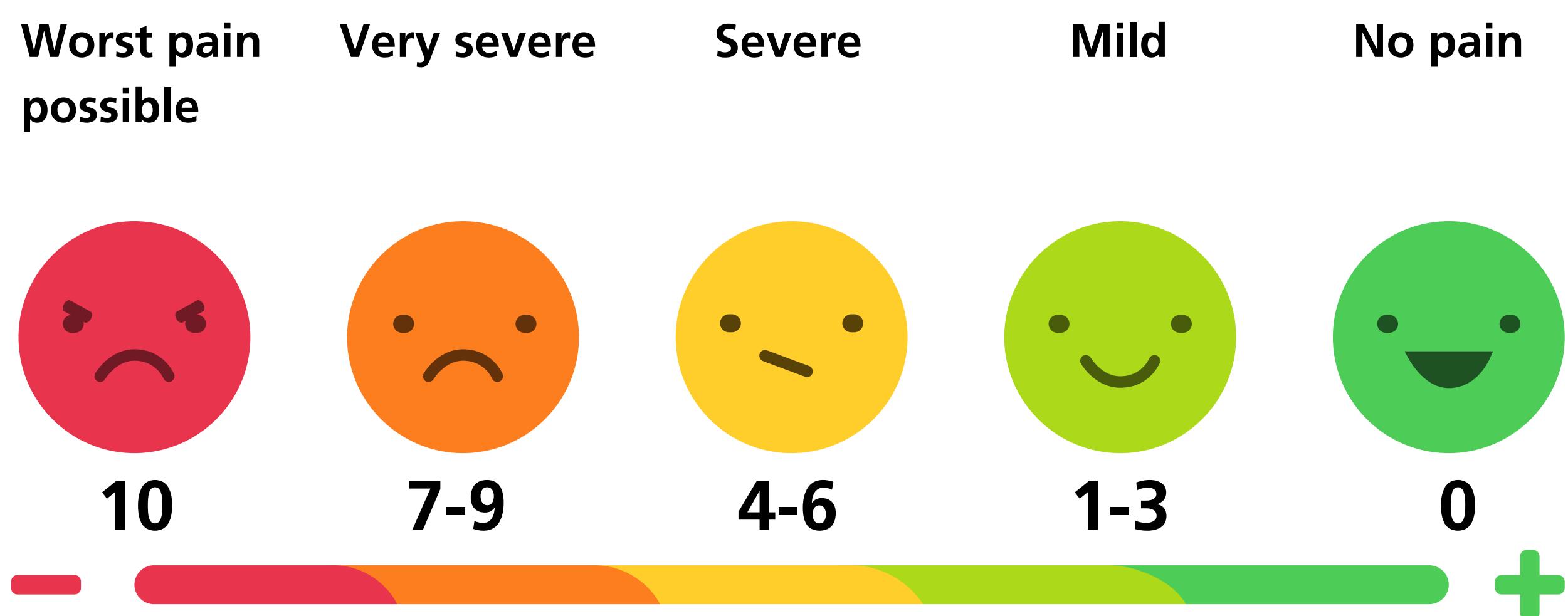




When doing manual techniques, the idea is to be comfortable and find a technique that does not provoke too many symptoms. Use gentle but firm pressure.

Always aim for what is called “sub-threat”. To explain this term, we think about a pain scale with 0 being nothing and 10/10 being excruciating. When doing techniques, this figure should never peak above 5/10. This concept can also be used to consider how anxious it feels to do techniques. Whether anxiety or pain, always aim to be below 5/10.

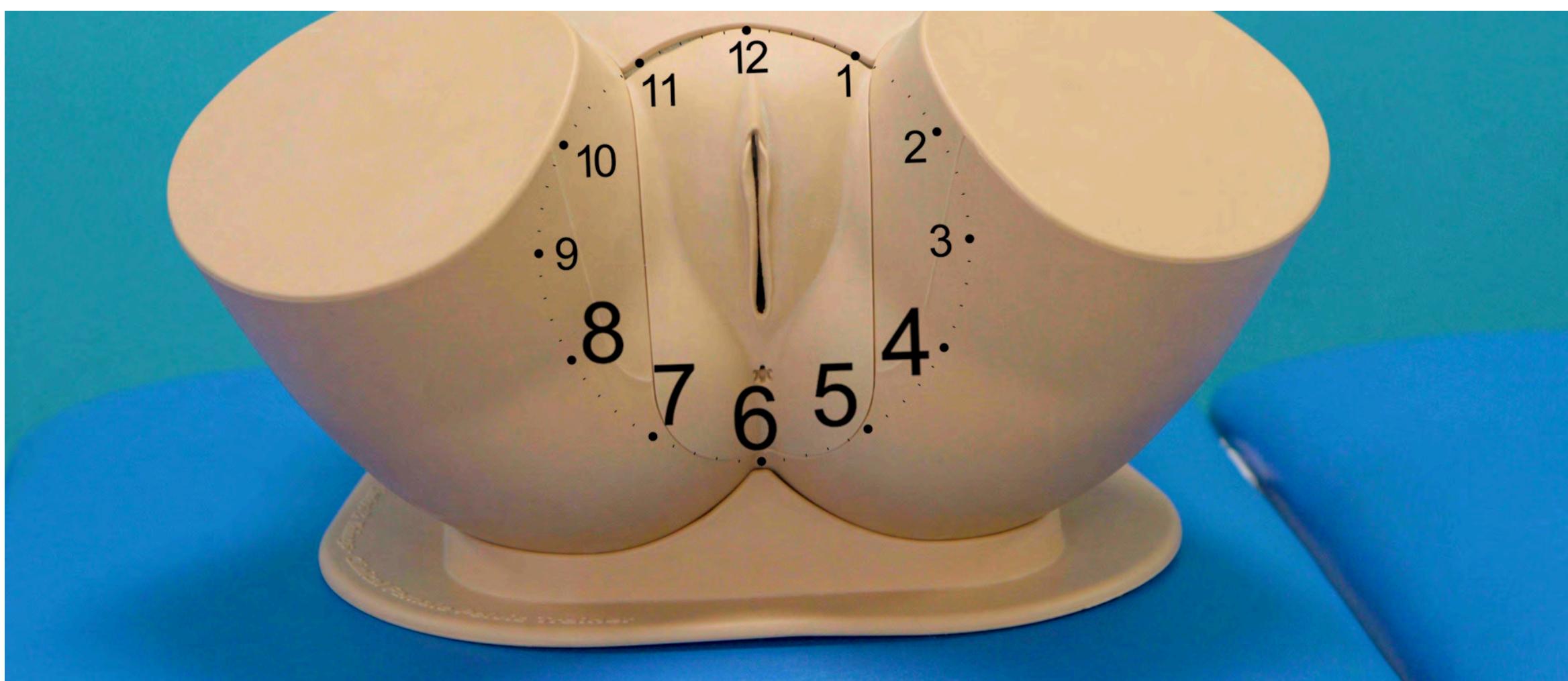
All that happens if the number pushes higher, is that the pelvic floor muscles tighten up in response; this is the opposite of the goal of enabling the tissues to be receptive and muscles to soften.



Additionally, should you find that pain lingers for more than half an hour after a session of releasing, then consider **modifying** what you are doing by trying a different technique, or being gentler, or doing less repetitions.

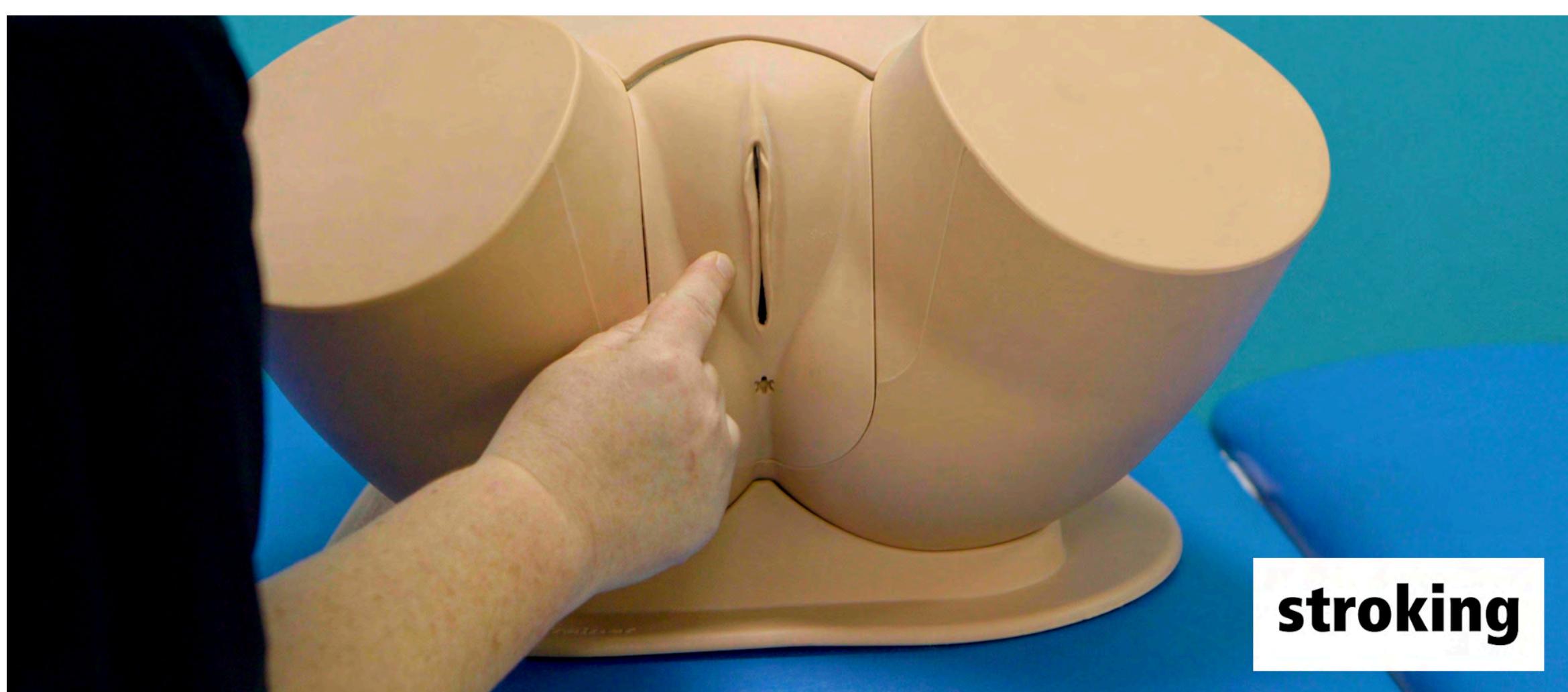
Where are these techniques to be applied?

Think about the vagina as a clockface. 12 o'clock is up by the clitoris, 6 o'clock is the back passage, and 3 and 9 o'clock are the sides. Between 3, 6 and 9 o'clock is where the focus should be, and the techniques are very useful between 4 and 8 o'clock.



Stroking

Stroking can be an effective technique if things are particularly sore and sensitive. It can be soothing to both tissues, muscles, and the whole area.



Stroking can be used on the outside as well as on the inside. If there are particularly tender areas it is a good idea to work towards them in a stroking movement, rather than away.



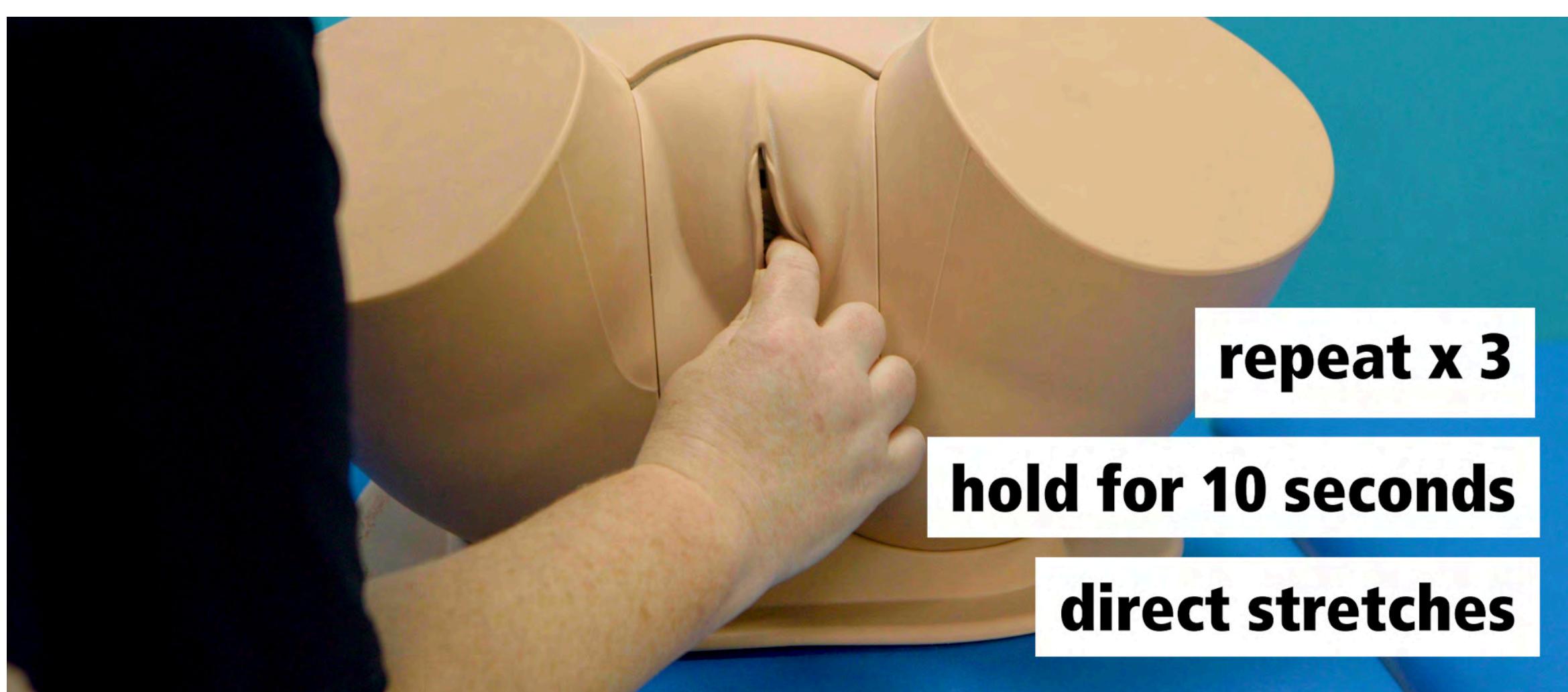
Direct stretches

Direct stretches are a useful technique to work on particular areas. The idea of doing these is to enable certain areas to stretch out and lengthen and show the muscle how to release off. You may find as you move around the clock face that some areas feel absolutely fine, and some are more provocative. Still work at the areas which feel comfortable, as this is very useful for your body to work out a normal response to stretch. When you are working on more sensitive areas there may be less pressure to apply to begin with.

Start at one side, for example at 3 o'clock – insert the finger a little and then put pressure on the side to achieve a stretching feeling. Remember to make sure it is gentle but firm and not reaching a pain score of more than 5/10.

You are aiming to open a little. Hold for 10 seconds and then release. Repeat this 3 times. Then move to the next station of the clock, to 4 o'clock and do the same. Pressure on, hold and breathe for 10 seconds, then release. Repeat this 3 times. Move a little more and repeat.

There may be some areas which require a gentler stretch and others that you can be firmer with. Feel and listen to what your body needs.



Aim to spend around 10 minutes exploring these techniques and try to do this regularly.

A video showing these techniques in more detail is available on our website www.eoemskservice.nhs.uk/our-services/pelvic-health-physio/pelvic-health-resources under pelvic pain conditions heading.