

Biofeedback for Pelvic floor muscle (PFM) training

Dr Beth Shelly PT, DPT, WCS, BCB PMD

Biofeedback is a term referring to a group of techniques used to increase your awareness of your body. There are many types of biofeedback. Some require machines or devices and some do not. The PFM is inside the body and difficult to feel. Sometimes it feels like there is a very strong contraction but biofeedback shows it is not strong and sometimes we feel like it is a very small contraction but biofeedback shows it is contracting well. In all cases these techniques are helpful in learning how to contract and relax the muscle correctly.

Biofeedback without machines

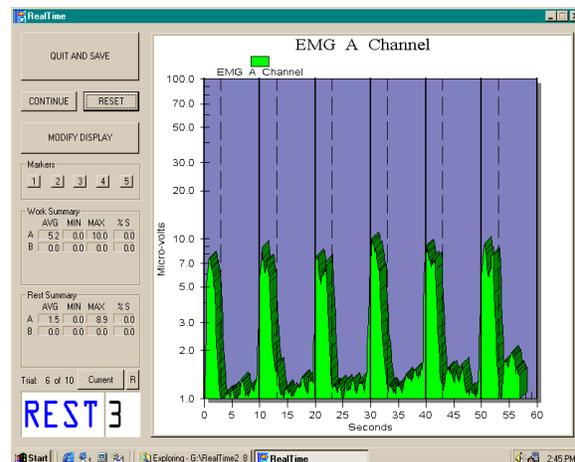
Looking at the PFM or touching the PFM on the outside of the body or inside the vagina or rectum can give you more information about how the muscle is contracting and relaxing. These techniques can help but are sometimes not sensitive enough to show the entire story.

Biofeedback machines

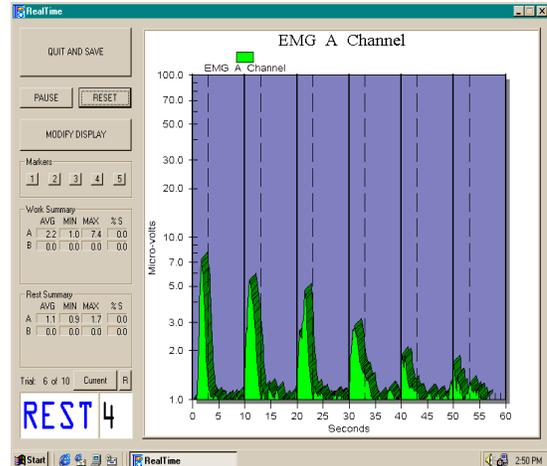
Most people think of EMG biofeedback when training the PFMs. This device displays the activity of the muscle on the computer screen similar to an EKG. It helps the patient and the therapist understand the muscle better and tailor the treatment. This device requires a sensor that is inserted inside the vagina or rectum or sticky patches attached to the outside of the rectum. Your therapist will know which is best for your condition.



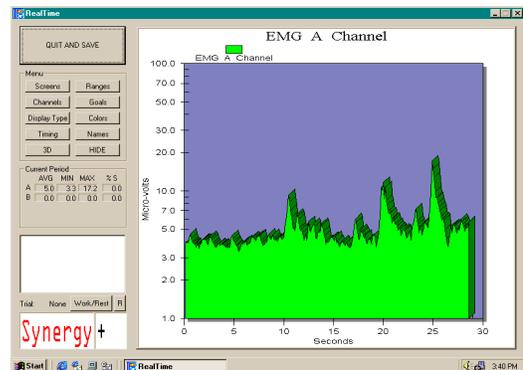
The machine can show a normal muscle activity



Or it might show a weak muscle



Or even a muscle that is in spasm



Patients train with the machine in the office each session to learn the best technique and know what they must do at home to improve the muscle function. This type of training is called "Neuromuscular re-education" as we are teaching the muscle the proper technique. Some patients require home trainers but many can learn the techniques in the office and do them well at home. Neuromuscular re-education is always combined with other treatments to have the best success.

Another form of biofeedback is the imaging ultrasound. This shows a picture of the PFM affect on the bladder. A PFM contraction should lift the bladder upward. This information also helps to improve the muscles ability to contract and strengthen.



Dr Beth Shelly PT, DPT, WCS, BCB PMD
www.bethshelly.com
563-940-2481

Biofeedback for other reasons

Biofeedback can be used to enhance your ability to relax your entire body. Hand warming is a technique used to increase blood flow to the hands and it has been shown to result in relaxation of the entire body. Whole body relaxation is helpful in chronic pain conditions and situation where stress increases urine leakage. Temperature biofeedback can help you learn hand warming. These devices can be ordered in many places.

Speak to Beth about biofeedback for your PFM.

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