

Pessaries for Vaginal Prolapse

Gynaecology

Introduction

This leaflet has been designed to give women who may need a vaginal pessary fitting for a prolapse a better understanding of the procedure. Do not be afraid to ask your medical or nursing team more about pessaries if this booklet does not answer all your questions.

What is a prolapse?

A prolapse is a common condition where the walls of the vagina and sometimes the womb are no longer supported. They bulge down within and sometimes outside the vagina. Prolapse is caused by a weakness in the ligaments and muscles that support the vagina. These supports may weaken with age, following childbirth or after menopause. About 10% of women (1 in 10) have a prolapse that causes them bothersome symptoms.

What are the symptoms of a prolapse?

Many women with prolapse have no symptoms or problems at all. The prolapse can cause symptoms such as a sensation of a vaginal lump or bulge, constipation, and lower backache, difficulty emptying the bowel or bladder, or problems with sexual intercourse.

What is a vaginal pessary?

A pessary is a plastic or silicone device which is placed into the vagina by your doctor or nurse to support the vaginal walls so that your prolapse is no longer noticeable. Having a pessary inserted will not cure your prolapse, but it reduces or relieves any symptoms caused by a prolapse. Most women with these pessaries cannot feel them. About 70% of women (7 in 10) who use a pessary find it successfully treats their symptoms. However, not everyone finds a pessary to suit them. You will be fitted with either a ring, gel horn or shelf pessaries, depending on the type of prolapse that you have.

Pessaries come in various shapes and sizes and it might take several attempts to find the right size and shape that works for you. This is usually possible at your first appointment, but sometimes a pessary may fall out when you get home.

You should contact your doctor or nurse if this happens so you can arrange to try another pessary or discuss other treatments.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.



Gel horn pessary



Ring pessary

shelf pessary

The type of pessary you have will depend on the type and severity of your prolapse and whether or not you want to be sexually active. Your doctor or nurse will discuss this with you. The choice about which treatment is best for you will be made together with your doctor based on the risks and benefits of the treatment and individual circumstances.

What are the risks?

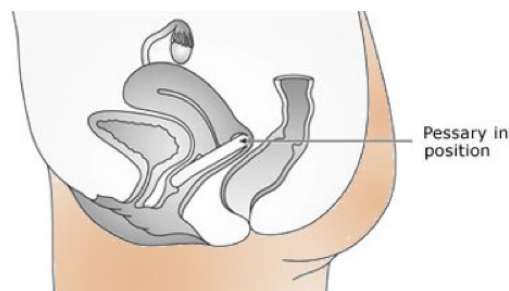
Occasionally, pessaries can irritate the vaginal walls and cause bleeding and discharge. You may have vaginal irritation. Long term use may cause ulcers (sores) inside the vagina or infection. Having your pessary changed on a regular basis will lower the risk of this, but if it does happen you should make an appointment to see your doctor or nurse. The pessary may need to be left out for a few weeks while the area is treated with vaginal cream. Sometimes urinary incontinence may occur after a pessary is inserted due to re-positioning of the bladder. If you notice any change in your bladder or bowel function that you are not happy with, the pessary may not be the best option for you and you should contact your nurse for advice.

How is a pessary fitted?

A trained doctor or nurse in the clinic will fit the pessary. The doctor or nurse will explain the procedure and answer any questions or concerns that you may have. They will insert an instrument (speculum) to look at your vagina and cervix (neck of womb) to check for any abnormalities. You will have a vaginal examination to find out the size of the pessary you will need. It may take more than one fitting to find the correct size for you.

If it is uncomfortable or falls out, you may need a different size of pessary. The procedure should only take a few minutes and you may feel a stretching sensation and a little discomfort.

You will be asked to walk around and go to the toilet to pass urine once your pessary has been fitted. When the pessary is in correct position, you should not be able to feel it.



How often should my pessary be changed?

Once you have a pessary that is comfortable and stays in place it will need to be changed every 4-6 months, depending on the type. You will receive an appointment to come back and see your doctor or specialist nurse. They will remove the pessary and check for any problems, such as bleeding, ulcers or infection in the vagina, before replacing it with another one.

If you have previously found this procedure uncomfortable, it may help to take painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen an hour prior to your appointment.

Can I continue to have sexual intercourse?

If a ring has been inserted you can continue to have intercourse. You and your partner may be aware of the pessary, but it should not cause a problem or harm to either. However, if you have a gel horn pessary in place, sexual intercourse is not advised.

Will I be able to have a bath or swim with a vaginal pessary in place?

The vaginal pessary should not interfere with activities such as swimming or bathing. It is important to maintain good personal hygiene with a pessary in place to reduce the risk of infection.

Who should I contact if I have problems with my pessary?

Please contact the Urogynaecology Secretary or Specialist Nurse if your pessary falls out or if you experience any problems with it.

It may be necessary for you to attend the hospital earlier than the planned follow up appointment.

Contact details

The Urogynaecology nurse can be contacted via 01902 307999 ext 88363.

Monday to Friday: 08:30 until 16:00. Please leave a message with the outpatients receptionist.

The Urogynaecology secretary can be contacted on 01902 695161.

Monday to Friday: 08:00 until 16:00.

Useful sources of information

www.nhs.uk/conditions/prolapse-of-the-uterus

This website, run by the NHS, includes information about prolapse.

Bladder and Bowel Foundation

A charitable organization for people with bladder and bowel control problems (including a prolapse) providing information and support services.

www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/patients/patient-information-leaflets/gynaecology/pi-pelvic-organ-prolapse.pdf

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਅਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。