

MANAGING YOUR PROLAPSE

Continence & Women's Health Physiotherapy



WHAT IS A PROLAPSE?

Pelvic organ prolapse is a condition that occurs when any of the pelvic organs (bladder, uterus or rectum) drop into the vaginal space. Prolapse occurs due to excessive stretch of the fascia and ligaments that normally help to suspend these organs.

The most common cause for prolapse is vaginal birth delivery, however chronic conditions such as constipation, coughing or repetitive heavy lifting can stretch these ligaments. This is due to an increase in abdominal pressure during these activities, which in turn places excessive pressure on the pelvic floor over time.

PROLAPSE SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of a prolapse include:

- Heaviness, dragging or a bulging sensation in the vaginal region
- Discomfort with sexual intercourse
- Bladder dysfunction: incomplete emptying, urinary incontinence, difficulty initiating urine flow
- Difficulties with passing bowel motions.

HOW DO WE MANAGE A PROLAPSE?

Conservative management is almost always the first step for treating prolapse and involves:

- 1 Lifestyle advice: managing constipation and respiratory conditions, reducing repetitive heavy lifting, weight loss.
- 2 Pelvic floor exercises: improving the strength of your pelvic floor muscles can improve the support of your prolapse and aid in reducing symptoms.
- 3 Pessary: see next page for further information.

Surgical intervention can occur in severe cases or when conservative management has failed. This normally involves either repairing the walls of the vagina to make them stronger to prevent the prolapse, or using an artificial sling to relocate the prolapse.



WHAT IS A PESSARY?

A pessary is a soft silicone ring, cube or cylinder that fits into the vagina to help support prolapses. It aids to support the prolapse into a more optimal position and stops the prolapse from dropping further.

ASSESSMENT FOR A PROLAPSE

Your Women's Health Physiotherapist is able to assess whether you have a prolapse. Alongside your GP or gynaecologist, they will normally perform an internal vaginal exam to determine the presence, type and stage of prolapse.

CARING FOR YOUR PESSARY

It is easy to care for your pessary. Your physiotherapist will instruct you how to appropriately.

Ring and Gellhorn pessaries need to be removed and cleaned with warm water and soap, and left out overnight once weekly. Cube pessaries must be removed every night and cleaned with warm water and soap.

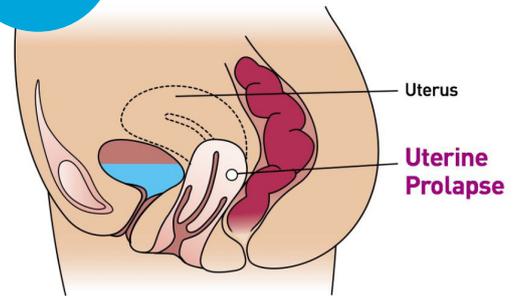
SIDE EFFECTS OF PESSARY USE

Most side effects of pessary use are mild and easily managed. These include:

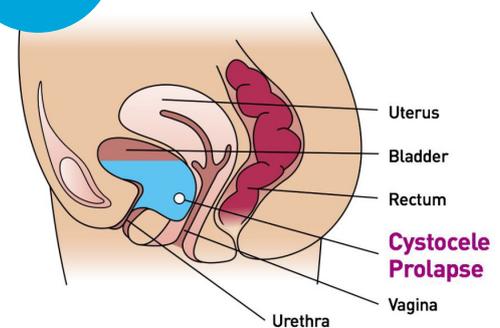
- Mild vaginal discharge
- Constipation
- Erosion (like a pressure sore)
- Vaginal bleeding
- Onset or worsening of urinary incontinence.

More serious but less common complications generally occur when patients do not attend their regular follow up appointments. If you begin to experience any side effects, please contact your physiotherapist.

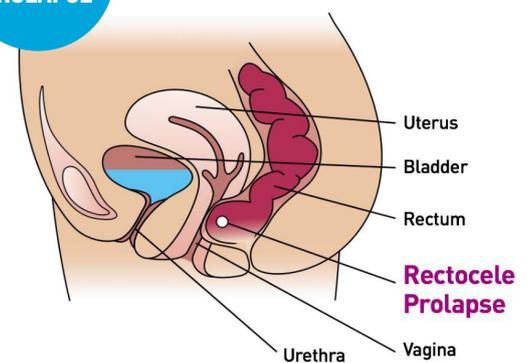
UTERINE PROLAPSE



BLADDER PROLAPSE



BOWEL PROLAPSE



Our physiotherapist, Claire Kennedy, is qualified to assess, treat and manage your prolapse and any other pelvic related issues you may be experiencing.

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