

## Vaginal Pessary Information Leaflet

### What Is A Pessary?

A pessary is a plastic or silicone device that fits into your vagina to support a prolapsed bladder, rectum or uterus (womb). There are different types but the most commonly used are either a ring or a shelf pessary. 71%- 90% of women are successfully fitted with a pessary.

### What Is A Prolapse?

A prolapse means that your uterus, bladder or rectum is bulging or leaning into the vagina, because the muscular walls of the vagina have become weakened. This can sometimes be felt as a lump in the vagina. If the prolapse is large it may also cause difficulty when emptying the bladder or bowel. It is possible for women to have more than one type of prolapse. 50% of women can get a prolapse. Patients can have varying symptoms such as vaginal heaviness, pelvic pressure bulging into the vagina and backache.

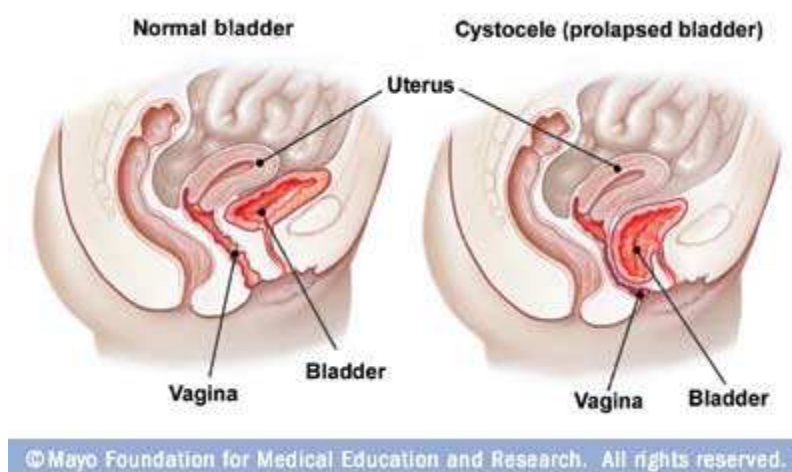
### What Are The Different Types Of Prolapse?

#### Cystocele

A cystocele occurs when the vaginal wall that is next to the bladder becomes weakened. This causes the bladder to lean (or prolapse) into the vagina, where it may then be felt as a lump (See Figure 1)

#### Cystocele

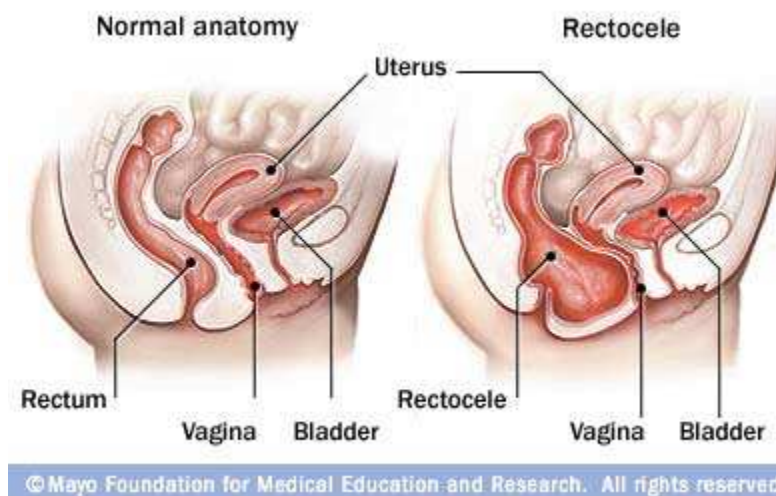
**Figure 1**



#### Rectocele

A rectocele occurs when the vaginal wall next to the rectum becomes weakened. This causes the rectum to lean (or prolapse) into the vagina, where it may then be felt as a lump. This type of prolapse may cause difficulty when opening your bowels. (See Figure 2)

**Figure 2**

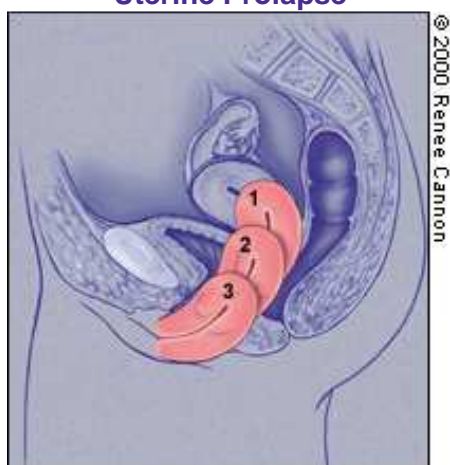


### Uterine prolapse

A Uterine prolapse occurs when the structures that support the womb weaken. This may cause the front and back walls of the vagina to weaken as well and then cause the womb to slip down into the vagina or even outside of the vagina completely. (See Figure 3)

**Figure 3**

### Uterine Prolapse



### What Are The Benefits Of Using A Ring Or Shelf Pessary?

These devices will help to relieve the symptoms of prolapse and can sometimes help improve urinary incontinence or bladder symptoms.

These devices are suitable for anyone who does not wish to have surgery or if surgery is not appropriate.

### Are There Any Alternative Treatments For Prolapse?

Some small prolapses can be treated with physiotherapy.

Different types of prolapse can be corrected with different types of operations. Your Doctor will be able to explain these to you and whether they would be suitable for your type of prolapse.

### What Kind Of Pessary Will I Use?

Your doctor/nurse specialist will decide which type of pessary you should use depending on the prolapse you have and also if you are still sexually active. Most times the first pessary that is inserted fits comfortably.

After the first fitting you will probably be seen within a few months to make sure all is well. After that you will probably be seen every 4- 6 months to have a check-up and a new pessary inserted. Sometimes the size or shape of the pessary may need to be altered. This will include removing the pessary, performing a vaginal examination to review the skin inside the vagina. In some circumstances we may not be able to reinsert the pessary immediately.

## How Do I Care For My Pessary?

You do not need to do anything; most pessaries can be worn for many months before they have to be taken out and changed. It is very important that you attend your check-up appointments.

It may also be possible to put the pessary in (or change it) yourself. Please ask the Doctor/Nurse if this is suitable for you.

## Can The Pessary Cause Any Risks Or Side Effects?

You may notice more vaginal discharge than normal. Your vaginal discharge may also develop an odour. If this happens then you must see your GP who may need to take some swabs and check the vagina for any infection. Vaginal discharge is a common complaint with using pessaries. There is a 32% chance of bacterial vaginosis(vaginal infection) in comparison to 10% of women who don't have a pessary in place.

Vaginal irritation is another possible side effect. Women who are past menopause are more likely to have this problem and may need to use an oestrogen cream or tablet which is applied to the affected area every night over a period of time.

There is a risk of erosion (wear and tear) to the vaginal skin, this can cause bleeding and/or discharge. If you have any abnormal bleeding do not ignore this. Seek medical advice.

Some women find that after the pessary has been inserted that they can leak urine. This can settle within a short period of time however there may be a more suitable alternative pessary that can be offered.

## Can The Pessary Get Lost Or Fall Out?

The vagina is a tubular structure with no opening on the inside (See Figure 4) and the pessary can't go anywhere else inside the body. The pessary can fall out of the vagina, especially if you strain or lift something. The pessary can also fall out if you get constipated. In this case please see your GP for something to help empty your bowels.

**Figure 4**

**Placement of a Vaginal Ring Pessary**



## What Else Should I Know?

Some pessaries can be kept in place during intercourse; your doctor/nurse will advise you about this. Please inform your doctor/nurse as soon as possible if you have any of the following:

- Discomfort from the pessary
- Difficulty passing urine
- Difficulty having a bowel movement
- Vaginal bleeding.

If you have any queries or complications with your pessary, such as the pessary falling out, any bleeding or discharge do not hesitate to contact the nurses on of the phone numbers listed below. Please leave a message and a contact number and the nurses will get back to you as soon as it is possible.

## Phone Numbers:-

Urogynaecology Outpatients Dept. - 0151 702 4321

Aintree Centre for Women's Health: Assessment Unit 0151 529 2025

**If you are in severe pain or you cannot pass urine, then please contact the Emergency room on 0151 708 9988 ext. 4120 or your GP for further advice or assistance.**

**You will not be seen in the emergency room if your pessary has fallen out. It is not an emergency to refit your pessary.**

This leaflet can be made available in difference formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at [pals@lwh.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@lwh.nhs.uk)