

# Information for women who may choose a vaginal pessary

**This leaflet provides information to help you decide on whether a vaginal pessary is a good treatment option for your vaginal prolapse.**

## Introduction

Your GP has referred you to see a specialist gynaecologist in the Pelvic Floor Clinic because you have pelvic organ prolapse (vaginal prolapse or prolapse).

Pelvic organs prolapse is when the uterus, bladder or rectum drop down from their usual position to form a bulge in the vagina. Common symptoms of a prolapse include:

- Feeling of a lump in your vagina.
- Not being able to empty your bladder or bowel fully.
- Difficulty with sexual intercourse.
- Lower backache.

## What is the treatment?

Prolapse can be treated in various ways. This leaflet covers treatment using a vaginal pessary.

## What are the alternative options?

- No treatment
- Physiotherapy
- Surgery

Please ask your gynaecologist for more information on these.

## What are vaginal pessaries?

Vaginal pessaries are plastic medical devices.

They come in varying shapes, sizes and degrees of flexibility.

They are inserted into the vagina and lift the prolapse back into its correct position.

**The aim is to resolve bothersome prolapse symptoms.**

## What should I expect when using vaginal pessaries?

During your appointment, the doctor will examine you internally. This is done to determine the type and size of pessary you will need. We might need to try different sized pessaries until we find the one that suits you. This can sometimes take more than one clinic visit.

Once you have the correct size/type of pessary you will be reviewed by the specialist nurse or doctor every 6 to 12 months. The purpose of these reviews is to ask about any problems and to check that the vaginal skin remains healthy. Some pessaries are exchanged at these times, while other types of pessary are cleaned and reinserted.

## Types of pessaries

At the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, we use four types of pessaries: the Ring; the Gellhorn; the Silicone and the Shelf.

## Sexual activity

Ring shaped pessaries allow for sexual intercourse. However, intercourse is not possible with other types of pessary. Many women prefer to remove and reinsert their ring pessaries whenever they wish.

## Advantages of vaginal pessaries

- No need of surgery.
- Stops prolapse getting worse.
- Long-term successful treatment of prolapse.

## Risk if using vaginal pessaries

Most women will not experience adverse effects from their pessaries. Most problems are minor and can be successfully treated.

Some women experience increased vaginal discharge and occasional bleeding due to the pessary rubbing against vaginal skin.

If pessaries are left unchecked for long periods, they can cause ulceration of the vaginal skin.

## Is the pessary painful to use?

A correctly fitting pessary is not painful or uncomfortable to use.

Pessaries can sometimes be awkward to remove and insert, the doctor can advise on several ways to avoid this.

The specialist gynaecologist might also recommend that you start using oestrogen cream or pessary (vaginal tablet). This strengthens the vaginal skin, reducing scratching from the pessary.

## After your initial pessary fitting, please report any of the following problems:

- Significant pain within the vagina or pelvis.
- Vaginal bleeding.
- Abnormal vaginal discharge.
- Difficulty in passing urine.
- Difficulty opening your bowels.
- The pessary is persistently shifting or falling out.

## Further information and contact details

- NHS Website Pelvic organ prolapse <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pelvic-organ-prolapse/>
- [www.bladderandbowel.org](http://www.bladderandbowel.org).

If you have any urgent concerns, please call Sonning Ward on **0118 322 8204**.

If you have any non-urgent concerns, please contact Senior Staff Nurse Sinini Chikwiri, on **0118 322 7721** Monday to Friday 8am-4pm. Alternatively, you can leave a message with the Sonning Ward clerk, on **0118 322 7191**.

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

S Chikwiri, Snr Staff Nurse, January 2021

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