

VAGINAL PESSARY FOR VAGINAL PROLAPSE

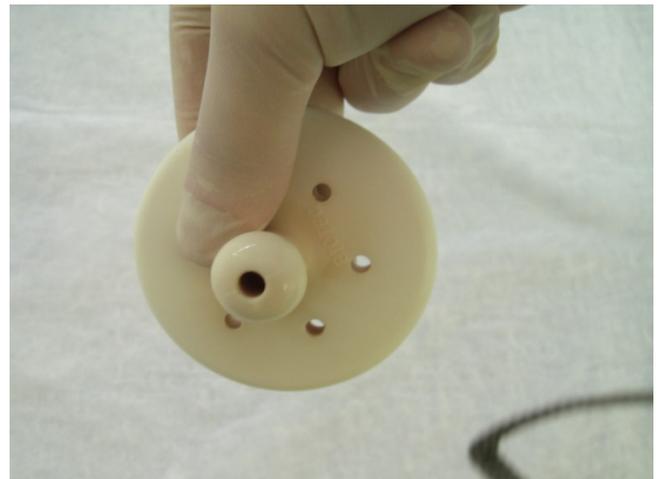
Vaginal prolapse is very common and not all women with prolapse need surgery. For women who want some treatment but not surgery, there is the option of a vaginal pessary device.

What is a vaginal pessary?

A pessary is a silicone support device which sits inside the vagina to help improve symptoms from a prolapse. Pessaries are available in many different shapes and sizes. The most commonly used shape is a “ring pessary” which is shaped like a doughnut [1]. Multiple different sizes are available so there is a size to suit almost every patient.



Ring pessaries are 1st choice and come in many sizes



Other shapes are only used if ring pessaries fail

Am I suitable for a ring pessary?

There is a pessary to suit most women. Vaginal pessaries are especially suitable for:

- *Older women who are not keen on surgery*
- *Women with multiple medical problems for whom surgery would be dangerous*
- *As a temporary treatment for young women whose family is not yet complete*
- *Women with previous failed surgery who do not wish to undergo further prolapse repair*

How will I know what size pessary I need?

Finding the correct size of pessary for women is crucial. The pessary should sit in place without being felt by the woman. If the pessary is too small it will fall out – if it is too large it will be uncomfortable. Vaginal pessaries should be fitted by an experienced gynaecologist. Often several different sizes are tried initially in a “trial-and-error” process. **Dr. Colin Walsh has successfully fitted pessaries for hundreds of women and is experienced in managing pessary-related problems.**

Are there any women not suitable to try a pessary?

80% of women are successfully fitted with a pessary at the 1st visit by an experienced gynaecologist. A small number of women find pessaries uncomfortable. Pessaries are less likely to be successful in:

- *Post-menopausal women not using vaginal oestrogen cream*
- *Women with multiple previous surgeries / radiation therapy*
- *Severe prolapse which is protruding outside the vagina*
- *Women with chronic pelvic pain*



Pessaries work best for moderate prolapse

Are there any problems associated with pessary use?

Although pessaries are very helpful for many women, they only provide a temporary treatment and not a permanent cure. The longer a pessary is used, the more likely the woman is to have complications. Common complications with pessary use include [2]:

- *Vaginal discharge and ulceration*
- *Pessary falling out unintentionally*
- *Vaginal pain*
- *Constipation*

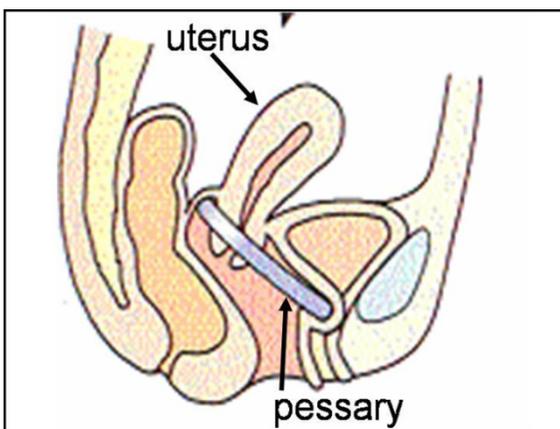


Severe prolapse is more likely to require surgery

Severe complications only occur if a pessary is neglected.

How do pessaries work?

Once inserted, the pessary sits at the top of the vagina, behind the pubic bone at the front and around the cervix at the top of the vagina. In this way, it provides support for the front, top and back of the vagina and hopefully improves the pressure and discomfort associated with vaginal prolapse. The hole in the centre of the pessary allows passage of any vaginal discharge or bleeding.



I am still sexually active – can I use a vaginal pessary?

Women using pessaries need to have them removed and replaced regularly, to prevent serious complications such as fistula. As a minimum, ring pessaries should be removed and replaced every 6 months. Women who are sexually active can be taught to remove and reinsert the pessary themselves, to allow normal continuation of sexual activity.

References

1. **Walsh CA**, Slack M. Pelvic Organ Prolapse. In: Shaw RW, Luesley D, Monga A, eds. Gynaecology, 4th edition. Elsevier; 2010; 849-864.
2. Sarma S, Ying T, Moore KH. Long term vaginal ring pessary use. BJOG 2009 116: 1715-21.