

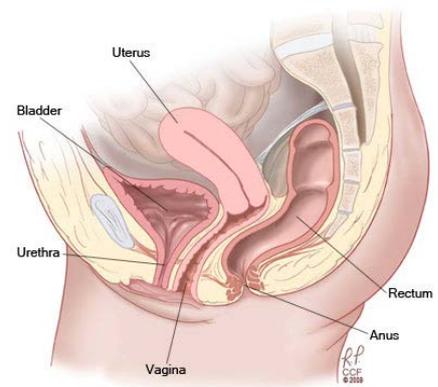
Surgical repair of vaginal prolapse: anterior / posterior vaginal wall (or pelvic floor) repair

Introduction

This is a leaflet is for women are thinking about surgery to treat vaginal prolapse. If there is anything you do not understand or if you have any questions please speak to your doctor or nurse.

What is a vaginal prolapse?

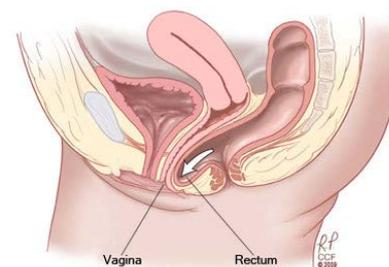
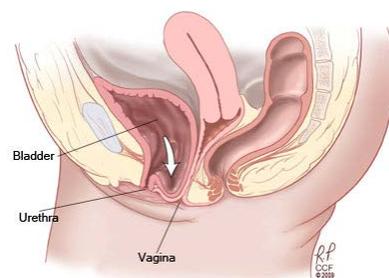
- The bladder, bowel and womb (uterus) are pelvic organs that are held in place by muscles and ligaments.
- If these supportive tissues are weakened, these organs bulge into the vagina causing vaginal prolapse.
- There are different types of prolapse depending on where these weaknesses occur and which organs are affected.



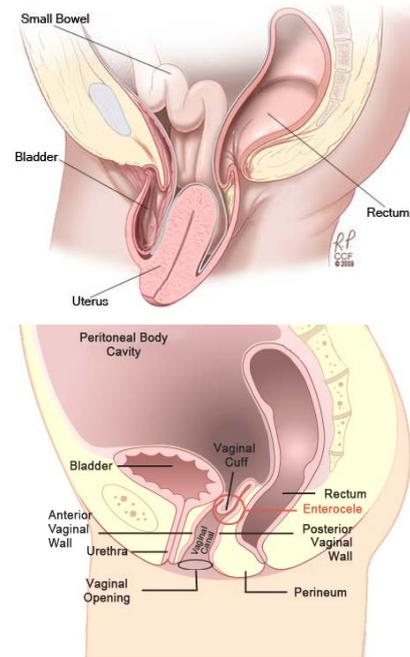
Side view of normal female pelvic organs

What types of prolapse are there?

- Cystocele: prolapse of bladder causing the front wall of the vagina to bulge.
- Rectocele: prolapse of the rectum causing the back wall of the vagina to bulge.



- Uterine prolapse: prolapse of the uterus from the top of the vagina.
- Vaginal vault (cuff) prolapse: prolapse of the top of the vagina in a woman who has had her uterus removed (hysterectomy).



What problems can prolapse cause?

Prolapse is **not dangerous** and may **not cause any symptoms** at all. Some women can experience symptoms such as:

- A dragging sensation / discomfort / pain within the vagina or lower abdomen (tummy).
- A visible bulge coming from the vagina.
- Difficulty emptying the bladder or bowel.
- Leakage of urine.
- Difficulty/pain during sex.

How do we treat prolapse?

There are many treatments for prolapse depending on how severe it is and how it affects your day-to-day life.

- No treatment – most prolapses do not get worse.
- Lifestyle changes – such as weight loss (if you are overweight) and avoiding constipation. Pelvic floor exercises can help to improve some symptoms.
- Vaginal pessaries – these are plastic devices that stay within the vagina to hold the prolapse in place. They have the advantage of avoiding the risks of surgery. For more information on pessaries, please ask for the information leaflet called ‘Vaginal pessaries for prolapse’.
- Surgical treatments.

Surgical treatment of prolapse

- Your doctor will discuss with you the different types of operation that may be appropriate for you.
- Operations can be performed through the abdomen (tummy) or vagina (vaginal wall repairs).

What happens during a vaginal wall repair?

- You will be asleep during this operation (general anaesthetic), which takes between 30 and 90 minutes.
- Cuts are made internally, within the vagina. The weak tissues are repaired using dissolvable stitches.
- If the weakened tissue needs extra strengthening, your doctor may discuss using dissolvable or permanent mesh.
- An anterior (front) vaginal wall repair corrects a cystocele (bladder prolapse).
- A posterior (back) vaginal wall repair corrects a rectocele (bowel/rectal prolapse).

Some types of prolapse need additional surgery at the same time as vaginal wall repair:

- The uterus may be put back into its correct position – sacrospinous fixation (please ask for the sacrospinous fixation ‘SSF’ information leaflet).
- The uterus may be removed – vaginal hysterectomy (please ask for the vaginal hysterectomy information leaflet).

What should I expect after the vaginal wall repair?

- A catheter will empty your bladder – this usually comes out on the next morning.
- A vaginal pack (like a large tampon) to reduce bleeding and bruising. This usually comes out on the next morning.
- Most women stay in hospital for **1 to 2 nights** after the operation.
- There will be a small amount of vaginal bleeding which should get gradually lighter and stop over 1-2 weeks.
- There can be a slight discharge for 1-2 weeks after the operation. You should contact your GP if the discharge becomes foul-smelling.
- We advise taking regular simple painkillers such as paracetamol and/or ibuprofen for up to 2 weeks after the operation.
- We also advise avoiding constipation after this operation. You may be prescribed mild laxatives to help with this.
- Your surgeon or GP will see you in the days after your operation if you have any concerns.

For 6 weeks after your operation, we recommend avoiding:

- Exercise.
- Lifting anything heavier than a 2 litre bottle of water.
- Driving.
- Sexual intercourse.
- Constipation / straining.

This will minimise the chances of the operation failing

What are the risks of vaginal wall repairs?

- The most common risk with this operation is the risk of failure. Worldwide numbers show that prolapse can return in 3 out of every 10 women after having a vaginal wall repair. This still means that 7 out of 10 repairs are successful.
- Heavy bleeding requiring a blood transfusion is rare but bruising is common.
- Infections of the bladder or vagina can occur after vaginal repair operations. You will be given antibiotics during the operation to minimise this risk.
- Difficulty in emptying your bladder.
- Injury to bladder or bowel (less than 1 in 100 operations).

Further information

NHS Choices <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Prolapse-of-the-uterus/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

<http://www.rcog.org.uk/information-for-you-after-pelvic-floor-repair-operation>

If, after you have gone home, you have any questions or concerns. Please call the Emergency Gynaecology Clinic where the staff will be happy to help you.

Emergency Gynaecology Clinic Telephone Number: 0118 322 7181 / 8204 (this number is available 24/7).

For more information about the Trust, visit our website at www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Images courtesy of <http://www.womensdoctor.com/prolapse/pelvic-prolapse/> & Tim Peters & Co, 2011.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Department of Gynaecology, October 2017

Review due: October 2019