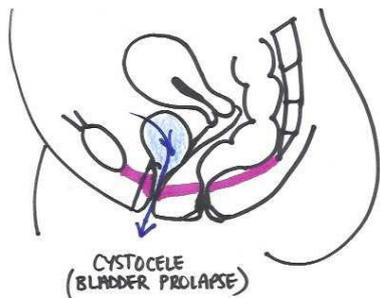
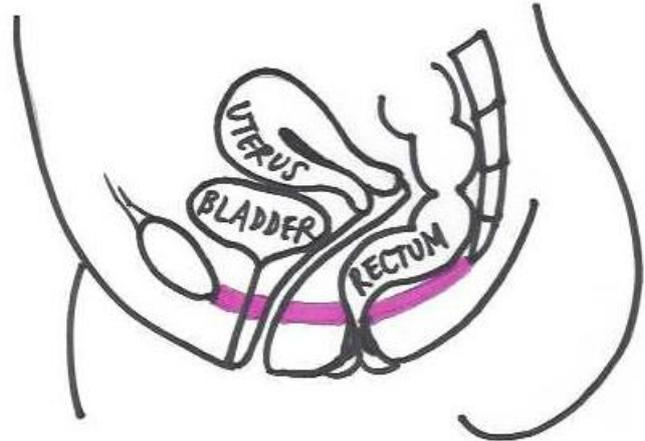


Pelvic Organ Prolapse

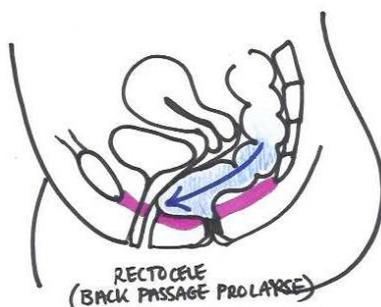
This leaflet offers more information about pelvic organ prolapse. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

What is Pelvic Organ Prolapse and why have I got it?

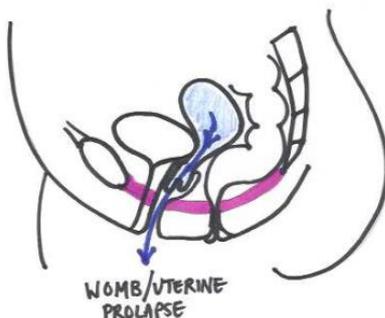
A pelvic organ prolapse is a common condition that can affect women of all ages. It occurs when one or more of your pelvic organs lose some of their normal support and move out of position pushing into your vagina. This could either be your bladder, uterus or back passage. The medical terms to describe these respectively are cystocele, uterine prolapse or rectocele. Some women may experience a combination of all three.



A cystocele occurs when the bladder pushes into the front wall of the vagina. This may cause difficulty in emptying the bladder, urinary frequency and sometimes incontinence.



A rectocele occurs when the rectum pushes into the back wall of the vagina. This may cause difficulty in emptying the bowels and can cause or worsen constipation.



A uterine prolapse occurs when the womb moves down into the vagina.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Not all prolapses are symptomatic; however, you might have experienced one or more of the following common symptoms:

- Sensation of a bulge or heaviness into your vagina
- Lower back pain
- Urinary or bowel incontinence
- Difficulty emptying bladder or bowel
- Needing to pass urine more frequently
- Pain or discomfort during intercourse.

What can I do about it?

The good news is that you are able to strengthen your pelvic floor muscle and therefore increase the support to your pelvic organs. There are some simple exercises that you can do to strengthen up this muscle group. Please see our female pelvic floor educational video ([link](#)) or pelvic exercise sheet for these exercises.

It may take between 6-12 weeks of consistent pelvic floor strengthening before you notice any improvement in your symptoms. This might seem like a long time; however, it is important you persevere as these exercises can make a significant difference to your symptoms.

Can I still exercise?

Yes! Exercise is really important and appropriate exercise can improve your symptoms, however some activities are known to cause an increased pressure on your support mechanisms including your pelvic floor. If you are experiencing prolapse symptoms during a certain activity, it is advisable to modify this activity until your pelvic floor is strong enough to withstand the increased pressure. You should only continue with this activity once it no longer worsens your prolapse symptoms. Consider these activities which commonly increase the pressures.

- High impact exercise- for example: jumping, running, HIIT. You could consider temporarily replacing these with swimming, cycling, Pilates, yoga, fast walking or other low impact exercise.
- Heavy Lifting- this could include carrying your food shopping home, moving heavy furniture or lifting weights in the gym. Think about reducing loads and modifying daily activities whilst you are improving pelvic floor strength. Sometimes lifting is unavoidable, in these instances try squeezing and holding your pelvic floor muscles through the lift.
- Finally, during any exercise it is important you do not hold your breath. Try breathing out on exertion.

Is there anything I can do to help myself?

Other tips to improve your symptoms.

- Avoid long periods of standing. Try to pace yourself when you notice you have been standing for a while, stop and move around, or sit if necessary. Some tasks could be done while sitting, for example ironing or chopping vegetables.

- Avoid becoming constipated, as straining to empty your bowels can worsen your symptoms. If you need some tips on how to manage constipation, please see our healthy bladder and bowel habits video or our constipation management leaflet (link below).
- Maintaining a healthy weight is important for many reasons. We know that being overweight increases prolapse symptoms. There are many resources on the NHS website for weight management. If you are struggling with this speak to your GP for further help.

Useful sources of information

Healthy bladder and bowel educational video: https://youtu.be/eqquWN0Em_Q

Pelvic organ prolapse educational video: <https://youtu.be/IVOUNfkpFEw>

(PF) Female pelvic floor educational video: <https://youtu.be/Mu9WVtURYRQ>

Constipation management leaflet, Pelvic floor exercises leaflet (available at <https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-information/>)

NHS Weight management resources: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/start-the-nhs-weight-loss-plan/>

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your symptoms, please speak to your GP or midwife to get a referral to pelvic health physiotherapy.

Website: <https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/service/therapies/womens-and-mens-health-physiotherapy/>

Twitter: @SGHpelvicphysio

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer). **Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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