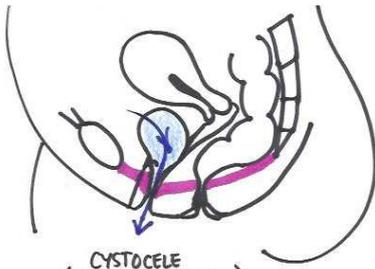
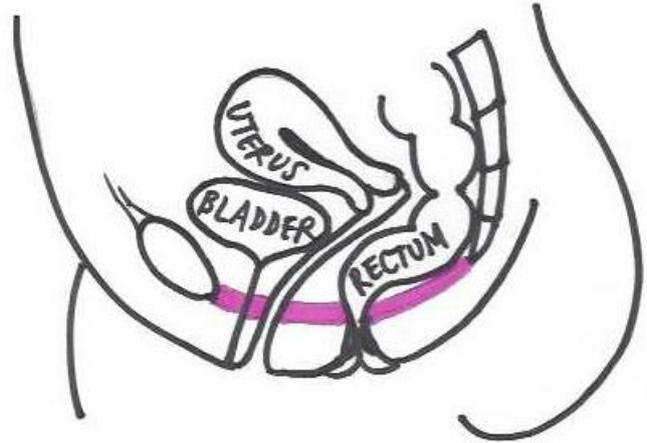


Pelvic Organ Prolapse

This leaflet provides 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?

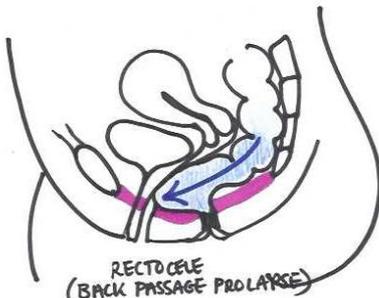
A pelvic organ prolapse is a common condition that can affect women of all ages. It occurs when one or more of your pelvic organs lose some of their normal support and move out of position pushing into your vagina. This could either be your bladder, uterus or rectum. The medical terms to describe these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



CYSTOCELE

Anterior wall
Prolapse

An anterior wall prolapse (previously known as cystocele) is the most common prolapse. It occurs when the bladder pushes into the front wall of the vagina. This may cause difficulty in emptying the bladder which could cause infections. It may also cause an increase in urinary frequency daytime and at night, incontinence and difficulty in starting the flow of urine.

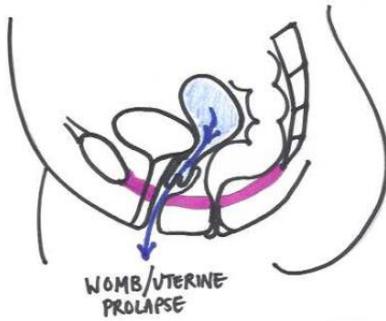


RECTOCELE
(BACK PASSAGE PROLAPSE)

Posterior wall
Prolapse

A posterior wall prolapse (previously known as rectocele) occurs when the rectum pushes into the back wall of the vagina. This may cause difficulty in emptying the bowels or incomplete emptying of the bowels and it may also cause an increase in the sudden urge to empty your bowels or worsen constipation.

A uterine prolapse occurs when the womb moves down into the vagina due to lack of support. The cervix sits lower in the vagina. This may be noted when you have a smear test, but you may not be aware of the symptoms



Uterine
Prolapse

What are the signs and symptoms?

Not all prolapses display symptoms, 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 your bladder or bowel
- Needing to pass urine more frequently
- Pain or discomfort during intercourse.

Why have I got it?

Prolapse can be caused by several factors which affect the support system of the vagina. These are some of the main factors that can contribute

- Pregnancy and childbirth
- Obesity and being overweight
- Constipation and chronic straining
- Heavy lifting
- Family history
- Age
- Menopause and hormonal changes
- Chronic respiratory conditions
- Previous pelvic surgeries.

What can I do about it?

Pelvic organ prolapse is not life threatening and with the correct management may improve. These are some of the options for management of your prolapse:

- Adopt good bladder and bowel habits and avoid becoming constipated.
- Lifestyle changes: including reducing heavy lifting or weight loss if you are overweight.
- 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 (see link below). If you are struggling with this speak to your GP for further help.
- Improve your pelvic floor muscle function by completing pelvic floor exercises that focus on strengthening and relaxing your muscles.
- Your GP may discuss other options such as a vaginal support pessary or oestrogen treatment with you or refer you to a gynaecologist for further management.
- Avoid long periods of standing or take short breaks if unable to avoid these.

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 important and appropriate exercise can improve your symptoms.

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, lifting and carrying toddlers or long walks with a baby carrier on 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 lifting action
- Finally, during any exercise it is important you do not hold your breath. Try breathing out on exertion.

Useful sources of information

Please find videos on from the following QR codes

Female pelvic floor muscle exercises



Healthy Bladder and bowels



Pelvic organ prolapse educational video:



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

[Pelvic Health Physiotherapy - St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust \(stgeorges.nhs.uk\)](https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)



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 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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