

There may be students and observers present during your consultation as part of their ongoing training. Please let the staff know if you do not wish any students to be present during your attendance.

Please ask a member of staff if you would like a chaperone present during your procedure.

Southport Hospital
Town Lane,
Kew,
Southport,
Merseyside,
PR8 6PN
Telephone:
01704 547 471

Ormskirk Hospital
Dicconson Way,
Wigan Road,
Ormskirk,
Lancashire,
L39 2AZ
Telephone:
01695 577 111

Posterior vaginal wall repair without the use of mesh

Patient information

If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format
please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید،
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formacie,
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتيسيق
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

About this leaflet

You should use the information provided in this leaflet as a guide.

You should ask your gynaecologist about any concerns that you may have. You should take your time to read this leaflet.

A page is provided at the end of the leaflet for you to write down any questions you may have. It is your right to know about your planned operation or procedure, why it has been recommended, what the alternatives are and what the risks and benefits are. These should be covered in this leaflet. You may also want to ask about your gynaecologist's experience and results of treating your condition.

Benefits and risks

There are not many studies about the success and the risks of most of the procedures carried out to treat prolapse and incontinence, so it is often difficult to state them clearly.

In this leaflet, we may refer to risks as common, rare and so on, or we may give an approximate level of risk. You can find more information about risk in the leaflet 'Understanding how risk is discussed in healthcare' published by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

www.rcog.org.uk/media/sxup5q24/pi-understanding-risk.pdf

Infection control request

Preventing infections is a crucial part of our patients' care. To ensure that our standards remain high our staff have regular infection prevention and control training and their practice is monitored in the workplace.

We ask patients and visitors to assist us in preventing infections by cleaning their hands at regular intervals and informing staff of areas within the hospital that appear soiled.

As a patient there may be times that you are unsure whether a staff member has cleaned their hands; if in doubt please ask the staff member and they will be only too happy to put your mind at ease by cleaning their hands so that you can see them.

Special instructions

Contact information if you are worried about your condition:

- Your own GP

Other useful telephone numbers/contacts:

NHS 111

Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) – 0300 100 1000

Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) – 0800 328 6297

Please list below any questions you may have, having read this leaflet.

1).....

2).....

3).....

Please describe what your expectations are from surgery.

1).....

2).....

3).....

During your contact with us

It is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward/department sister/charge nurse if you have questions or concerns.

Matron

A matron is also available during the hours of 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. During these periods, ward/department staff can contact the matron to arrange to meet with you.

Out of hours, a senior nurse can be contacted via the ward/department to deal with any concerns you may have.

This table is taken from the leaflet in the link provided below.

Risk table		
Verbal description ^a	Risk	Risk description ^b
Very common	1 in 1 to 1 in 10	A person in family
Common	1 in 10 to 1 in 100	A person in street
Uncommon	1 in 100 to 1 in 1000	A person in village
Rare	1 in 1000 to 1 in 10000	A person in small town
Very rare	Less than 1 in 10000	A person in large town
^a EU-assigned frequency		
^b Unit in which one adverse event would be expected		

British Society of Urogynaecology

British Society of Urogynaecology (BSUG) have set up a database to understand the success and risks of surgery for prolapse and incontinence; this is a national database.

BSUG ask all members of the society to enter onto the database all procedures they carry out and how the patients fare after surgery. They may ask you before your operation if you agree to their entering the details of your procedure on this database. They then use this anonymised information to develop a picture of what procedures are being performed throughout the UK, as well as complications and patient satisfaction. Individual surgeons can also use it to see how they compare with others.

What is a posterior vaginal repair?

A posterior vaginal repair (posterior colporrhaphy) is an operation performed within the vagina (front passage) to treat a posterior (back) vaginal wall prolapse also called a rectocele. It is often combined with a repair of the area between the vagina and the back passage, the perineum (perineorrhaphy). This leaflet describes a posterior vaginal repair using your own tissues (native tissue repair) and without the use of mesh.

What is a posterior vaginal wall prolapse?

A prolapse is a bulge within the vagina caused by a weakness in the supporting tissues and muscles around the vagina, so that one or more pelvic organ bulges downwards into or out of the vagina. Pelvic organs include the uterus (womb), bladder and bowel.

Posterior means towards the back, so a posterior vaginal wall prolapse (also called a rectocele or a rectoenterocele) is a prolapse of the back wall of the vagina. The rectum (bowel) bulges through the vagina (Figure1 page 5).

The perineum is the area between the vagina and the back passage. It provides some support for the vagina and may be damaged during childbirth.

The pelvic floor muscles form a hammock across the opening of the pelvis. This hammock, together with their surrounding tissue holds the pelvic organs (bladder, uterus, and rectum) in place.

Making a decision - things I need to know before I have my operation.

Making a choice

Ask 3 Questions

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



1. What are my options?
2. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?
3. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?

*Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85

<http://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>

More information

If you would like to know more about uterine prolapse and the treatments available for it, you could do the following:

- Ask your GP.
- Ask the urogynaecology doctor or nurse at the hospital.
- Look at these websites:
- Patient UK at: <http://patient.info/health>

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
Recovering Well leaflet at:

www.rcog.org.uk/for-the-public/browse-our-patient-information/pelvic-floor-repair-operation-recovering-well/

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists patient
information leaflet – Pelvic organ prolapse at:

www.rcog.org.uk/for-the-public/browse-our-patient-information/pelvic-organ-prolapse/

International Urogynaecology Association (IUGA) patient
information leaflet – Posterior vaginal repair and perineal body
repair at:

bsug.org.uk/budcms/includes/kcfinder/upload/files/info-leaflets/Posterior-Repair-2020.pdf

Patient information leaflets (usually available on line).

A prolapse occurs when the pelvic floor muscles, their attachments or the vaginal tissue become weak. This usually occurs because of damage at the time of childbirth, but is most noticeable after the menopause when the quality of supporting tissue deteriorates. It is also related to long term straining caused by heavy lifting, repeated coughing and constipation.

With straining, for example on passing a motion, the weakness described above allows the rectum (back passage) to bulge into the vagina and sometimes bulge out of the vagina (rectocele).

A large rectocele may make it very hard to have a bowel movement especially if you have constipation.

Some women have to push the bulge back into the vagina with their fingers, support the perineum or insert a finger in the back passage in order to complete a bowel movement.

Some women find that the bulge causes dragging or aching.

Figure 1. (courtesy of the RCOG) - side view of a standing women without a prolapse.

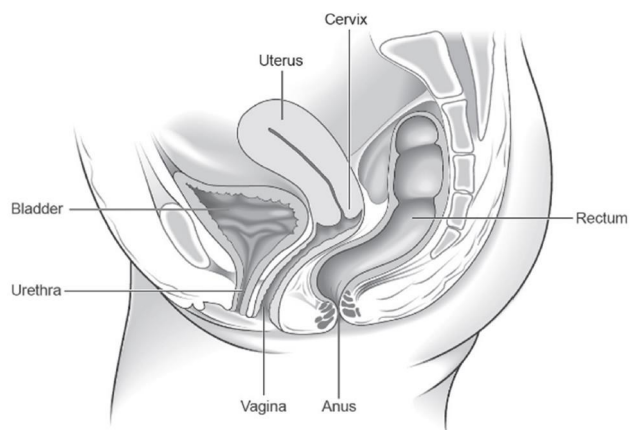
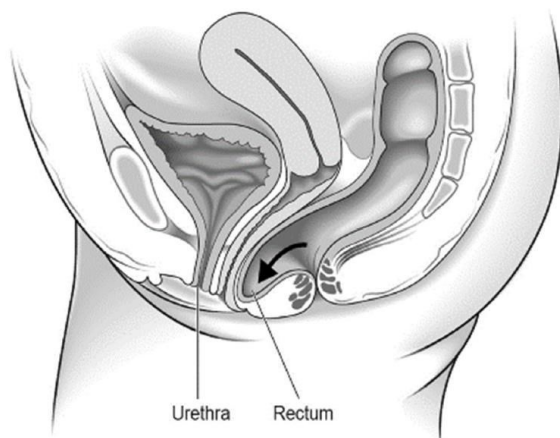


Figure 2. side view of pelvis with a prolapse



Treatment	Advantages	Disadvantages
Posterior vaginal repair (described in this leaflet)	Can be done with you awake or asleep (under general anaesthetic)	Recurrence rate of up to 30%
Colpocleisis (closing of vagina)	High success rates (90-95%) Can be done with you awake or asleep (under general anaesthetic)	Sexual intercourse will never be possible after this operation . Urinary incontinence in the future may be more difficult to treat. If you have not already had a hysterectomy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not possible to take a smear • Difficult to investigate inside the uterus if abnormal bleeding occurs

Pessary

A vaginal device, a pessary, may be placed in the vagina to support your vaginal walls and uterus.

A pessary is usually used continuously and changed by a doctor or nurse every four to twelve months, depending upon the type used and how well it suits you.

Alternatively, if you prefer, you may be taught to replace the pessary yourself. It is possible to lead a normal life with continuation of activities such as bathing, cycling, swimming and, in some cases, sexual intercourse.

Ongoing care is often at the GP practice, but some women will need to be kept under review in the gynaecology clinic. Pessaries are very safe and many women choose to use one long term rather than have an operation. On occasions you have to stop using a pessary due to bleeding, discharge, sexual difficulties or a change in bladder function but these all stop quickly after it is removed.

Sometimes it will take several visits to the clinic to determine the best size for you and a pessary is not suitable for everyone.

Surgical

The table on page 22, lists the different operations that can be considered to treat prolapse of the posterior vaginal wall (rectocele/rectoenterocele).

Further information on the operations is available in separate leaflets.

How is a posterior vaginal wall repair done?

The operation is usually done under general or spinal anaesthetic.

A general anaesthetic will mean you will be asleep during the entire procedure. A spinal anaesthetic involves an injection in your back to numb you from the waist down.

In rare circumstances, the operation is done using local anaesthetic but the results don't tend to be as good. The operation is all done vaginally and involves repairing the supportive tissues using dissolvable stitches.

These stitches usually take four to six weeks to dissolve, although some surgeons use sutures that take about three to six months to dissolve completely.

This should not affect your recovery time. If the perineum is repaired you might notice a few stitches on the outside, but these will dissolve and fall away fairly quickly.

A catheter and a vaginal pack (strip of gauze) may be inserted after the operation but this is not essential and depends on your surgeon's preference and method of operating. These are usually removed the following day.

Other operations which may be performed at the same time. Surgery for other types of prolapse to treat a prolapse of the uterus (womb) or the top of the vagina surgery to treat incontinence. You should also refer to an information leaflet about any planned additional procedure.

Benefits

The primary aim of the operation is to reduce the bulge within your vagina. You are likely to feel more comfortable; intercourse may be more satisfactory; and your bowel may empty more effectively.

General risks of surgery

Anaesthetic risk

This is very small unless you have specific conditions, such as a problem with your heart or breathing. If you smoke or are overweight, this also increases risk.

A posterior repair can be done with you asleep (a general anaesthetic) or awake (a spinal or local anaesthetic) whereby you are awake but numb from the waist down, or just the vaginal area numbed to most pain. This will be discussed with you.

What can I do?

Make the anaesthetist aware of medical conditions such as problems with your heart or breathing. Bring a list of your medications. Try to stop smoking before your operation. Lose weight if you are overweight and increase your activity.

Pelvic Floor Exercises (PFE)

The pelvic floor muscles support your pelvic organs. Strong muscles can help to prevent your prolapse dropping further. PFEs are unlikely however, to provide significant improvement for a severe prolapse which is protruding outside the vagina.

A women's health physiotherapist can explain how to perform these exercises with the correct technique. It is important that you try the above to help to manage the symptoms of your prolapse and to prevent it becoming worse. It is also very important to continue with your pelvic floor exercises, even if you have opted for other treatment options.

What to report to your doctor after surgery

- Heavy vaginal bleeding.
- Smelly vaginal discharge.
- Severe pain.
- High fever.
- Pain or discomfort passing urine or blood in the urine.
- Difficulty opening your bowels.
- Warm, painful, swollen leg.
- Chest pain or difficulty breathing.

Treatment alternatives

Non-surgical

Do nothing

If your prolapse is not too bothersome, then you may not necessarily need treatment. If, however, your prolapse permanently protrudes through the opening of your vagina and is exposed to the air, the skin on the prolapse may become dry and eventually crack and bleed or get infected.

This is why even if a prolapse which is coming outside the opening of the vagina is not causing symptoms, it is probably best to push it back with a ring pessary (see page 21) or have an operation to repair it.

Losing weight if you are overweight and avoiding risk factors such as smoking (leading to long term cough), jobs or exercise involving lifting heavy weights or high impact and constipation may help control your symptoms. Your prolapse may become worse with time but it can then be treated.

Bleeding

There is a risk of bleeding with any operation, but it would be uncommon for this to be a large amount. It is uncommon that we have to give a blood transfusion after this operation. Rarely bleeding can occur some hours or even days after the operation, meaning that you need to be taken back to the operating theatre for further surgery.

What can I do?

Please let your doctor know if you are taking a blood-thinning tablet such as warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel or rivaroxaban as you may be asked to stop them before your operation.

Infection

There is a small risk of infection with any operation (about 5 to 13 cases in 100 operations). If it occurs, an infection can be a wound infection, vaginal infection or a urinary infection and is usually treated with antibiotics. The risk of infection is reduced by routinely giving you a dose of antibiotic during your operation. You might also get a chest infection because of the anaesthetic.

What can I do?

Treat any infections you are aware of before surgery. After surgery, regular deep breathing exercises can help prevent chest infections; the nurses will guide you how to do this.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

This is a clot (thrombus) in the deep veins of your leg. Occasionally the clot can travel to the lungs (pulmonary embolism) which can be very serious and in rare circumstances it can be fatal (less than 1 in 100 of those who get a clot). The risk increases if you are overweight, have severe varicose veins, infection, are not very mobile, are taking hormones and if you have other medical problems. The risk is significantly reduced by wearing special compression stockings and having injections to thin your blood. This is referred to as thromboprophylaxis which means doing something to reduce or prevent thrombosis.

What can I do?

You should consider stopping taking any hormone tablets, such as Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and some types of birth-control pills four weeks before surgery.

Stopping these hormones will not be a threat to your life and the risk of continuing to take them may be greater than the benefit you will get from taking them. You can usually restart these four weeks after surgery when the risk of thrombosis (blood clots) has reduced. The risk is greatest for hormones taken as tablets. The risk from hormone replacement given through the skin using patches, gels and pessaries is very low but not completely absent.

If you decide to continue taking hormone medication, you will need thromboprophylaxis (blood thinning medication) during and after the operation.

You should be able to return to a light job after about six weeks, a busy job in twelve weeks. Avoiding unnecessary heavy lifting will possibly reduce the risk of the prolapse recurring.

You can drive as soon as you can operate the pedals, perform an emergency stop and look over your shoulder without discomfort, generally after three weeks, but you must check this with your insurance company, as some of them insist that you should wait longer.

You usually have a follow up appointment anything between six weeks and six months after the operation. This maybe at the hospital (doctor or nurse), with your GP or by telephone

Sometimes follow up is not required.

See link below for recovering well information leaflet:

www.rcog.org.uk/for-the-public/browse-our-patient-information/pelvic-floor-repair-operation-recovering-well/

Any of the stitches under the skin will melt away by themselves. The surface knots of the stitches may appear on your underwear or pads after about two weeks. This is quite normal.

There may be little bleeding again after about two weeks when the surface knots fall off. This is nothing to worry about. You are likely to feel tired and may need to rest in the daytime from time to time for a month or more. This will gradually improve.

It is important to avoid stretching the repair, particularly in the first weeks after surgery. Therefore, avoid constipation and heavy lifting. The deep stitches dissolve during the first three months and your body will gradually lay down strong scar tissue over a few months.

Avoiding constipation:

- Drink plenty of water / juice.
- Eat fruit and green vegetables especially broccoli.
- Plenty of roughage e.g. bran / oats.

Any constant cough is to be treated promptly. Please see your GP as soon as possible.

At six weeks, gradually build up your level of activity. After three months, you should be able to return completely to your usual level of activity.

Do not arrange surgery the day after a long car journey or flight. As soon as you are awake start moving your legs around. Keep mobile once you are at home and continue to wear your compression stockings during times when you are less mobile.

Wound complications

The wound within the vagina can become infected. Occasionally stitches can become loose allowing the wound to open up or on the other hand, tighten up causing discomfort.

What can I do?

Keep the surrounding area clean and dry. After washing use a clean towel or a hairdryer on a cool setting. Do not douche your vagina or use tampons.

General risks of prolapse surgery

Getting another prolapse

There is little published evidence about exactly how often prolapse recurs. Recurrence of the same prolapse probably occurs in about 1 in 10 cases, but it is generally believed that about 3 in 10 women who have an operation for prolapse will eventually require treatment for another prolapse. This is because the vaginal tissue is weak. Sometimes even though another prolapse develops, it is not bothersome enough to require further treatment.

Failure to cure symptoms

Even if the operation cures your prolapse, it may fail to improve your symptoms.

A change in the way your bowel works

Some women experience worsening constipation following surgery. This may resolve with time. It is important to try to avoid being constipated following your surgery as this may reduce your risk of developing another prolapse.

What can I do?

If you are struggling with constipation after simple changes in diet and fluid intake, your doctor/GP may prescribe some laxatives.

Altered sensation during intercourse

Sometimes the sensation during intercourse may be less and occasionally orgasm may be less intense. On the other hand, repair of your prolapse may improve it.

The healing usually takes about six weeks and after this time it is safe to have intercourse. Some women find sex is uncomfortable at first but it gets better with time. Sometimes the internal knots could cause your partner discomfort until they dissolve away.

You will need to be gentle and may wish to use lubrication initially. Occasionally pain on intercourse can be long-term or permanent.

Vaginal bleeding

There may be slight vaginal bleeding, like the end of a period after the operation.

Eating and drinking

You should be able to drink and eat within a few hours of returning to the ward.

Preventing DVT

You will be encouraged to get out of bed soon after your operation and take short walks around the ward. This improves general wellbeing and reduces the risk of clots in the legs. You may be given a daily injection to keep your blood thin and reduce the risk of blood clots until you go home or longer in some cases.

Going home

You are not usually in hospital for more than one or two days and may go home the same day. If you require a sick note or certificate please ask.

After your operation – at home

Mobilisation is very important; using your leg muscles will reduce the risk of clots in the back of the legs (DVT). Bathe or shower as normal. Do not use tampons for six weeks and avoid douching the vagina.

After your operation - in hospital

Pain relief

A posterior repair is not a particularly painful operation. Even when you are under a general or spinal anaesthetic it may include an injection of local anaesthetic into your vaginal tissues during the operation. Sometimes you require tablets or injections for pain relief.

Some women describe the pain as similar to a period. It is often best to take the pain killers supplied to you on a regular basis, aiming to take a pain killer before the pain becomes a problem.

Drip

You may have a fluid drip into a vein in your arm or leg after the operation; this is to keep you hydrated until you are drinking normally. The drip is usually removed within 24 hours.

Catheter

You may have a tube (catheter) draining the bladder. The catheter may give you the sensation as though you need to pass urine, but this is not the case. It is usually removed the morning after surgery or sometimes later the same day.

Pack

You may have a length of gauze in your vagina at the end of the operation. It acts as a pressure bandage and is usually removed the following day.

Specific risks of posterior vaginal wall repair

Damage to bowel

This is a rare complication but the damage needs to be repaired and this can delay your recovery. It is sometimes not recognised at the time of surgery and therefore you might need further surgery. If the rectum (back passage) is damaged at the time of surgery, temporary colostomy (a bag) may be required, but this is rare.

Painful sexual intercourse

The healing usually takes about six weeks and after this time, it is safe to have intercourse. Some women find sex is uncomfortable at first, but it gets better with time. You will need to be gentle and may wish to use lubrication initially. Occasionally pain on intercourse can be long-term or permanent.

Stress incontinence

If the prolapse of the posterior vaginal wall is large, it can occasionally cause some kinking of the tube through which you pass urine (urethra). This can be enough to stop urine leaks on coughing, laughing or sneezing (stress incontinence). By correcting the prolapse, this kink gets straightened out and the leaks are no longer stopped.

It is difficult to define an exact risk for a posterior vaginal repair and it is not common, but can occur.

What can I do?

Doing pelvic floor exercises regularly can help to prevent stress incontinence.

Bladder emptying or voiding problems

These generally improve after surgery for prolapse, but as is the case for any surgery in the pelvic area there may be problems with voiding (emptying your bladder) after the operation. There can be persistence of voiding problems for many months in 1 in 10 women, but very few women will have ongoing difficulty or be unable to void long term.

What can I do?

If you have difficulty passing urine, you may wish to lean forwards or even stand slightly to allow better emptying of your bladder. Make sure that you have your legs apart rather than having your knees together when sitting on the toilet. Waiting for a few minutes after the initial void and trying again may help. This is known as the 'double voiding' technique.

Learn Clean Intermittent Self-Catheterisation (CISC). CISC involves emptying out the urine, using a fine catheter tube. You pass this along the urethra (water pipe) into the bladder, so the urine can drain into the toilet. Once the urine is out, you remove the catheter and throw it away.

You use a new catheter each time and they are available on prescription, like tablets, from your doctor. Although passing a catheter might sound unpleasant, most women find it is easy to do and it gives you more control and freedom than using a permanent catheter. The normal feeling of wanting to pass urine is not altered, so you know when to empty your bladder. The catheters are very small and can easily be hidden in a handbag.

Before your operation - pre-op assessment

Usually you are seen in a preoperative clinic some weeks before your planned operation. At that visit you will be seen by a nurse and possibly also a doctor. You will be asked about your general health and any medications you take. Your blood pressure will be checked and you may have tests to assess your heart and breathing.

Blood tests will be taken to check you for anaemia and other things according to your medical condition.

Swabs may be taken from your nose and groin to make sure that you do not carry MRSA (bacteria that are very resistant to antibiotics and may cause problems after your operation).

You may be asked to sign a consent form if this has not been done already.