



MELBOURNE

**Pregnancy &
Pelvic Physio**

Pelvic Organ Prolapse

What is Pelvic Organ Prolapse (POP)?

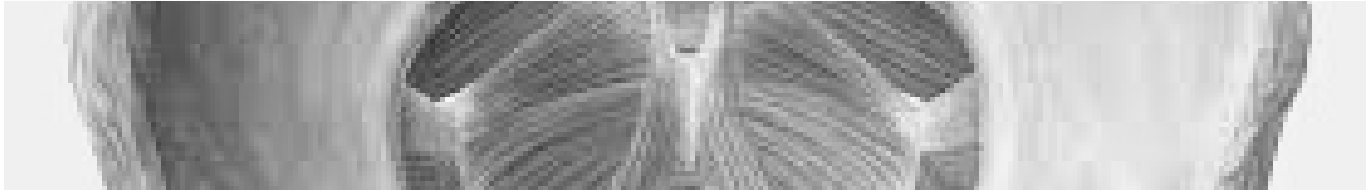
POP refers to a symptomatic bulge or heaviness felt in the vagina caused by descent of one or more of the pelvic organs into the vaginal opening. The pelvic organs include the bladder, bowel and uterus.

These organs are held in place by the pelvic floor muscles and support ligaments. When these structures become stretched or reduced in strength a prolapse can occur.

Symptoms of Pelvic Organ Prolapse

- Heaviness or dragging sensation
- Bulging from the vaginal opening
- Feeling of a lump or something 'coming down'
- Sexual problems such as pain or lack of sensation
- Difficulty emptying the bladder or bowel

It is considered normal to have some increase in movement or flexibility of the vaginal tissues after one or more vaginal births. Unless there are symptoms accompanying these findings, this is considered a normal anatomical change and not a prolapse.



PELVIC ORGAN PROLAPSE CONTINUED

Types of Prolapse

Depending on which organ has moved or 'prolapsed' the prolapse might be referred to as:

- Anterior wall (Bladder prolapse or cystocele)
- Apical (Uterine prolapse)
- Posterior wall (Bowel prolapse or Rectocele)

Causes of Prolapse

- Childbirth (vaginal delivery/ies can cause changes to function in the muscles and support ligaments)

The following may also contribute:

- Chronic coughing
- Obesity
- Repetitive heavy lifting
- Constipation and straining

Treatment for Prolapse:

For mild to moderate prolapse the first line approach is to:

- Reduce risk factors such as obesity, chronic cough, heavy lifting and constipation
- Improve Pelvic Floor muscle function under guidance of a pelvic floor physiotherapist

Other options or for severe prolapse:

- **Pessary** - a support device that can be worn inside the vagina. Ask your physio for more information.
- Surgery

However in women who have not addressed their risk factors or improved their pelvic floor muscle function, prolapse may come back even after surgery.

Can I still exercise?

Yes, exercise is very important to maintain for general health and wellbeing.

Your physiotherapist may suggest modifications to your usual exercise program to avoid aggravating prolapse symptoms. This may include modifying high impact activities and heavy weights or wearing a pessary whilst exercising.

