



What is a Pessary?

A vaginal support pessary is a device made from medical-grade silicone that is worn inside the vagina. It is used to stop the bladder, bowel or uterus from bulging into the vagina.

Types of Pessaries

Different types and sizes of pessaries are available. Your physiotherapist will figure out which type is the best option for you based on your symptoms and your daily activities.



Who can use a pessary?

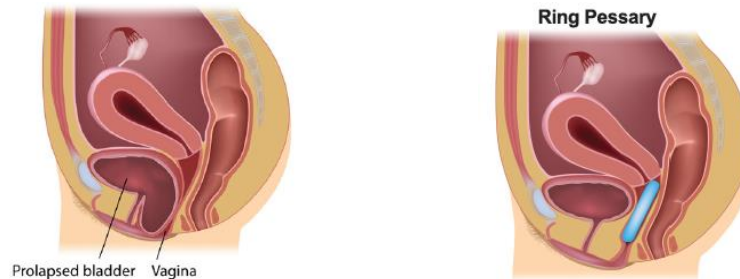
Pessaries can help women who:

- Have a bothersome vaginal bulge that stops them from doing their usual activities
- Wish to delay or avoid pelvic organ prolapse surgery, or who cannot have surgery

“Pessaries don’t ‘cure’ prolapse but they can improve the symptoms associated with it”

How a pessary is fit?

A pessary should improve the symptoms of pelvic organ prolapse (like a vaginal bulge or urine leakage). You should not be able to feel the pessary when it is in place (like a tampon). A pessary can be successfully fit in 60% of women.



During a pessary fitting, your physiotherapist will first complete a vaginal examination to decide the best pessary to try. They will then insert a pessary and check how it sits inside the vagina when you are lying down and then when you are standing up. You may then be asked to re-dress and complete some heavier activities (e.g., walking, squats, jogging on the spot) and to go to the toilet to empty your bladder. This will help make sure the pessary will stay in during your daily activities.

It is common to try a few sizes and/or types to find the best pessary for you. Some women experience some mild discomfort when the pessary is inserted and removed. This discomfort may linger after the appointment, but should settle by the next day. After this, a pessary should be comfortable to wear.

Once a pessary that sits well inside the vagina has been found, your physio will teach you how to insert, remove and clean the pessary yourself. Once you are confident, you can choose to purchase the pessary and start using it straight away.

What are the Risks?

Increased vaginal discharge

It is common to notice an increase in vaginal discharge with a pessary. This may settle as the body adapts to the pessary. Yellow discharge is ok but if the discharge becomes green, seek medical advice.

Vaginal bleeding

The pessary can sometimes rub against the skin inside the vagina. This can happen if the skin inside the vagina is thin or fragile. This might cause some bleeding or pink-stained vaginal discharge. If this is ignored, sores may appear on the skin

inside the vagina. Careful fitting of pessaries and following the self-care advice can help avoid this.

Vaginal infection

A pessary can increase the risk of a vaginal bacterial infection. This tends to cause heavy, green coloured and/or foul-smelling vaginal discharge. Women can manage this by removing the pessary and seeing their doctor for medication to treat the infection. Once the infection has been treated women can usually start using their pessary again.

Bladder or bowel issues

If a pessary is too large, it can cause difficulty emptying your bladder or bowel. In this case your physio can change your pessary to a smaller size or different type. Sometimes a pessary will cause urine leakage in someone who didn't leak urine before. If this happens, a different type of pessary can be tried.

Frequently Asked Questions:

How often do I need to replace my pessary?

Manufacturers recommend replacing your pessary every 12 months, or sooner if there are signs of wear (e.g., cracks, breakage).

Can I still have sex with a pessary?

This will depend on the type of pessary. The ring pessary can be worn during sex if it is comfortable for the woman and her partner, but other pessaries like a cube or gellhorn will need to be removed for sex.

Can I wear a pessary during my period?

Yes. The pessary is safe to wear during your period. Period blood might change the colour of the pessary, but it will still work just as well.

Can the pessary get lost inside the vagina?

No. The vagina is a closed space, so the pessary cannot move to another part of the body or get lost inside the vagina.

Do I need lubricant or vaginal oestrogen?

Putting some lubricant on the pessary can make it more comfortable to insert. If a woman is near or post-menopause, their vaginal skin might be thinner because of lower levels of the hormone oestrogen. Vaginal oestrogen can help keep the vaginal skin thick and healthy. You can discuss with your doctor if vaginal oestrogen is suitable for you.

“Combining pessary use with pelvic floor muscle exercises can enhance support, alleviate prolapse symptoms and improve quality of life”

Safe long-term pessary use

To help keep your vaginal skin healthy and to minimise risks, you will need to complete the following when using a pessary;

- Be comfortable removing, cleaning and re-inserting your pessary. You may need to do this daily or weekly depending on the type of pessary.
- Return to Physiotherapy yearly for a vaginal examination and to replace your pessary.
- See your doctor yearly for a speculum exam to make sure your vaginal skin is staying healthy.
- Use vaginal oestrogen if your doctor has prescribed this