

## Information for Patients

**The Pessary Clinic:**  
**Caring for you and your pessary****What is a prolapse?**

Sometimes the pelvic floor muscles and ligaments become weak and no longer support the pelvic organs such as the womb, bladder and bowels; this is called Pelvic Organ Prolapse. Childbirth, ageing and the menopause can weaken the pelvic floor resulting in a prolapse. Pelvic organ prolapse can cause a sense of bulge, discomfort, urinary and bowel problems as well as sexual difficulties.

A vaginal pessary is a synthetic device (made of latex, silicone or vinyl) which can be inserted into the vagina to alleviate or relieve symptoms of prolapse.

Vaginal pessaries avoid the need for surgery, therefore they are especially suitable for women who;

- Wish to have more children
- Have declined surgery
- Have medical conditions that prevents them from having surgery
- Are awaiting surgery (a pessary can be inserted as a temporary measure)

**How is the vaginal pessary inserted?**

A trained doctor or nurse will fit the pessary; they will explain the procedure and answer any questions that you may have.

You will then be asked to undress from the waist down and lie on an examination couch with your legs elevated in stirrups. Once you are comfortable the doctor or nurse will perform a vaginal examination. They will insert an instrument (speculum) to look inside the vagina and at the cervix (neck of the womb) to check for any abnormalities.

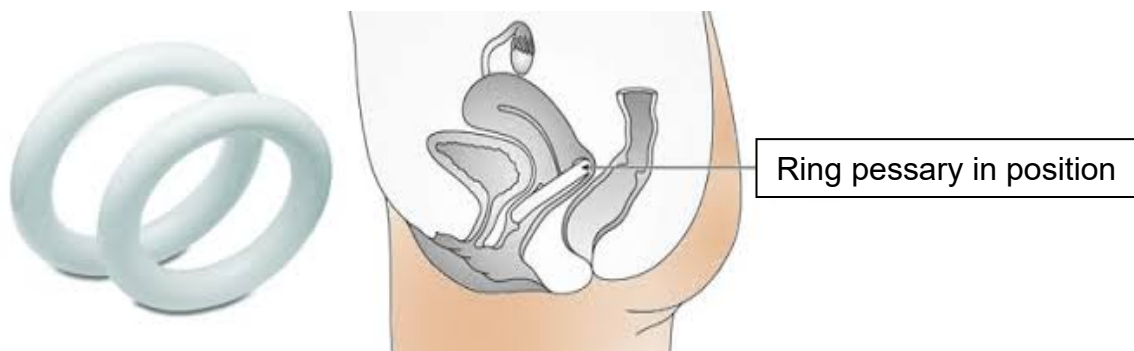
Following the examination the doctor or nurse will assess the type and size of pessary to be inserted. They will then apply lubricant or hormone cream to the pessary and insert it into the vagina in the correct position. Once the pessary is in place you may be asked to 'bear down' (as if having your bowels open). This is to check the position of the pessary and try to ensure that it is in the correct position and unlikely to drop out. It is important to understand that the fitting of a pessary is an estimation and is not an exact measurement. It can take trials of various sizes before the right fit is found.

Some women remove and replace their pessaries themselves. If you wish to consider this option you can discuss it with the nurse or doctor.

## What types of pessary are available?

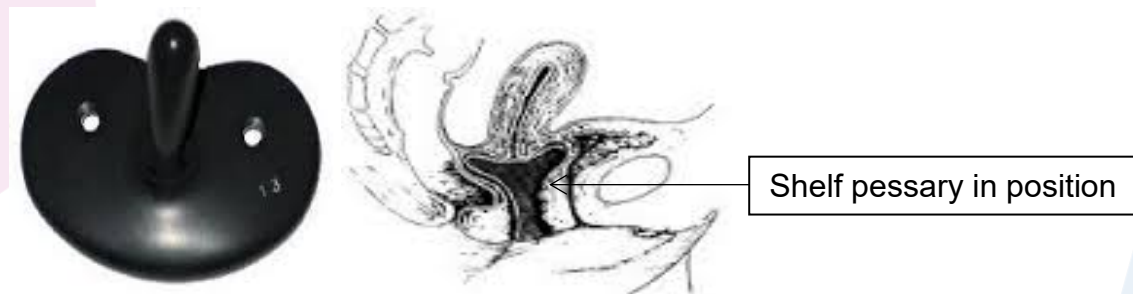
### Ring pessaries

Ring pessaries are round and are made either from vinyl or silicone. These are the most commonly used pessaries and are generally the first type that would be tried for most patients.



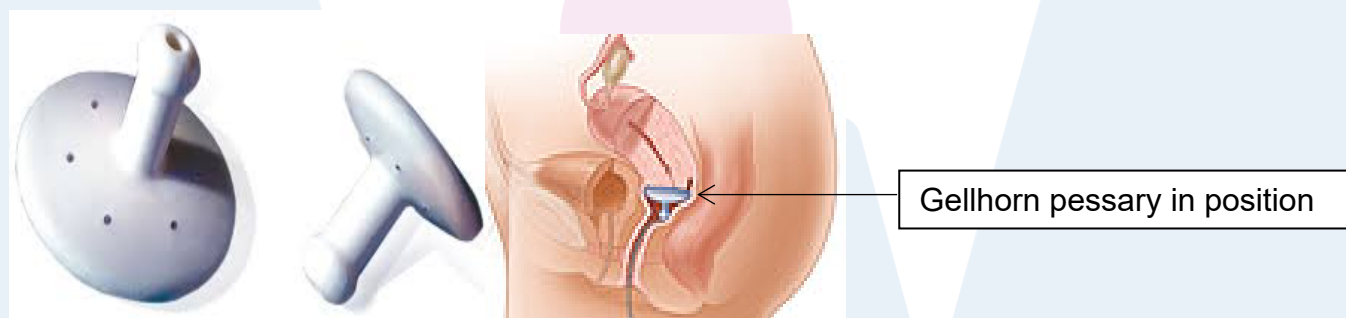
### Shelf pessaries

Shelf pessaries are flat and kidney shaped with a raised handle in the middle. They are hard and non-compressible; however, they are still comfortable to wear.



### Gellhorn pessaries

Gellhorn pessaries are made of silicone and are saucer shaped with a raised handle in the middle similar to a shelf pessary.



## Are there any risks or side effects with having a pessary?

There are some possible side effects which include:

- Discomfort in the vagina or pelvis during and after the pessary is inserted
- Vaginal discharge
- Vaginal bleeding/soreness caused by the pessary rubbing against the neck of the womb/cervix
- Urinary incontinence may occur after a pessary is inserted due to re-positioning of the bladder

All of these symptoms will be discussed at each appointment. If you do experience any abnormal bleeding you should inform your doctor or contact the clinic as this may need further investigation.

## Will the pessary affect my sex life?

If a ring pessary has been inserted, you can continue to have intercourse. You and your partner may be aware of it but it should not cause a problem or harm to either of you. Other types of pessary would prevent you from having intercourse, but this would be discussed with you prior to fitting.

## What about follow up?

The pessary needs to be replaced and assessed every 4-6 months in the pessary clinic and you will be given regular appointments for this.

## Should you have any queries or concerns or require more information please feel free to contact us via:

☎ To cancel/change appointments 0161 276 6332  
(Monday – Friday, 9.00 am – 5.00 pm)

☎ **Urogynaecology Clinical Nurse Specialist**  
0161 701 6150, 0161 701 6151, 0161 701 6776 (Monday-Friday 08:30-17:30)

☎ Out of hours please contact the Emergency Gynaecology Unit located at Wythenshawe Hospital on 0161 291 2561

🌐 <https://mft.nhs.uk/saint-marys/services/gynaecology/urogynaecology/>