



## Having a Vaginal Pessary

This leaflet will explain the benefits and risks of having a pessary fitted for vaginal prolapse or urinary incontinence. Please ask your doctor, nurse or physiotherapist if you have any further questions.

### What is a vaginal prolapse?

Vaginal prolapse is a common condition where the walls of the vagina and sometimes the womb are no longer supported. They bulge down within and sometimes outside the vagina. A vaginal prolapse is not harmful but treatment should help to ease your symptoms.

### What is a vaginal pessary?

It is a plastic or silicone device which is inserted into your vagina to hold a prolapsed womb or vaginal wall in place. There are a variety of pessaries, but we usually use a ring, shelf or gelhorn pessary, depending on the type of prolapse you have.



Ring



Gelhorn



Shelf

### What are the benefits?

A pessary is intended to make you more comfortable and may also improve any bladder symptoms you have.

### What are the risks?

- You may notice you have more vaginal discharge than normal and on occasion this can smell.
- You may have vaginal irritation. If you feel sore, and have been through the menopause, you may benefit from using oestrogen cream or tablets in the vagina.
- Long-term use may cause sore areas inside the vagina which can cause light bleeding or infection. This is why we recommend regular check-ups.

### How is the pessary fitted?

Before you have a pessary fitted, you will have a vaginal examination to find out the size of pessary you need. It may take more than one fitting to find the correct size for you. If fitted

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correctly, the pessary should not be uncomfortable and in time you may not feel it at all. If it is uncomfortable or falls out, you may need a different size or type of pessary.

### How often should my pessary be changed?

We recommend you have a check-up every four to six months. You can have your check-ups at your local GP practice if this service is offered. If not, we can see you in the hospital clinic.

### How long will I need a pessary for?

A ring pessary can be used long term or as a temporary measure until you have surgery for the prolapse. The size or type of pessary used may need to be changed over time.

### Can I have sexual intercourse with a pessary in place?

Please talk to your nurse, doctor or physiotherapist about this. You can have sex with a ring pessary in place, but not with a shelf or gellhorn pessary. We can teach you how to remove and replace the ring pessary if it feels uncomfortable while you're having sex.

### What happens if I have a problem with my pessary?

Please contact the department if your pessary falls out or you experience any problems with it.

### Contact Details:

**Solihull Hospital 0121 424 5382**

**Birmingham Heartlands Hospital 0121 424 1104**

**Good Hope Hospital 0121 424 9337**

### Our commitment to confidentiality

We keep personal and clinical information about you to ensure you receive appropriate care and treatment. Everyone working in the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential.

We will share information with other parts of the NHS to support your healthcare needs, and we will inform your GP of your progress unless you ask us not to. If we need to share information that identifies you with other organisations we will ask for your consent. You can help us by pointing out any information in your records which is wrong or needs updating.

### Additional Sources of Information:

Go online and view NHS Choices website for more information about a wide range of health topics <http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx>

### You may want to visit one of our Health Information Centres located in:

- Main Entrance at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital Tel: 0121 424 2280
  - Treatment Centre at Good Hope Hospital Tel: 0121 424 9946
  - Clinic Entrance Solihull Hospital Tel: 0121 424 5616
- or contact us by email: [healthinfo.centre@heartofengland.nhs.uk](mailto:healthinfo.centre@heartofengland.nhs.uk).

# Information for Patients

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## Dear Patient

We welcome your views on what you thought of this patient information leaflet, also any suggestions on how you feel we can improve through our feedback link below:

- Patient Information Feedback email:  
[patientinformationleafletfeedback@heartofengland.nhs.uk](mailto:patientinformationleafletfeedback@heartofengland.nhs.uk)

If you wish to make any other comments this can be done through the links listed below:

- Patient Opinion: [www.patientopinion.org.uk](http://www.patientopinion.org.uk)
- I want great care: [www.iwantgreatcare.org](http://www.iwantgreatcare.org) (Here you can leave feedback about your doctor)

Be helpful and respectful: think about what people might want to know about our patient information and this hospital and how your experiences might benefit others. Remember your words must be polite and respectful, and you cannot name individuals on the sites.

**If you have any questions you may want to ask about your condition or your treatment or if there is anything you do not understand and you wish to know more about please write them down and your doctor will be more than happy to try and answer them for you.**

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email [patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk).