

*Pessaries are little things that can make a big difference!*



*Your new pessary should be comfortable, secure and provide relief from your symptoms*

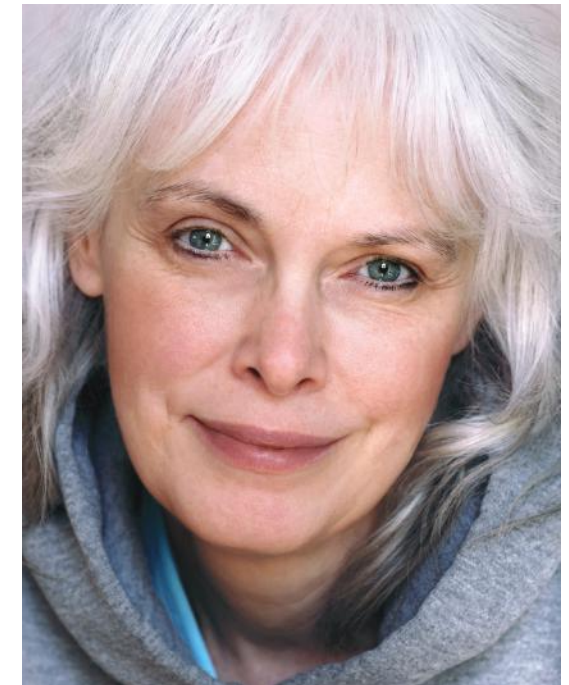
**What is a pessary?**

A pessary is a small medical device placed in the vagina that helps to support the uterus, bladder or rectum.



**Why did my clinician prescribe a pessary?**

A pessary is a simple and safe approach for women with genital prolapse, incontinence or urinary frequency. It can greatly reduce or even alleviate these bothersome symptoms. Pessaries may be used in place of surgery, or on a temporary basis while deciding on surgical options. In its normal position, allowing it to empty better.



*Use and Care of Pessaries*

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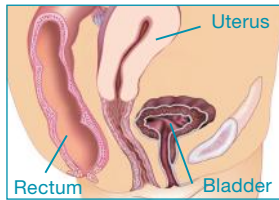
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**Educational Series**

## How does a pessary help with prolapse?

Prolapse occurs when the muscles and ligaments that support the pelvic floor weaken and the vaginal wall thins. The uterus, bladder or rectum fall down and, as a result of gravity, push into the vagina.



Normal Anatomy

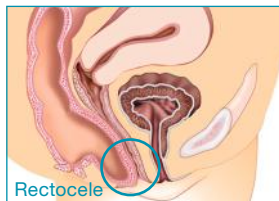


Uterine Prolapse

The illustration on the right shows how a ring pessary can help support a uterine prolapse. Other types of pessaries work in a similar way and support other kinds of prolapse (below).



Ring Pessary in Place



Rectal Prolapse



Bladder Prolapse

## Does a pessary help urinary incontinence?

It certainly does. In women with stress incontinence, the pessary exerts pressure on the urethra (urine tube) to decrease the escape of urine when coughing or sneezing. In patients with urge incontinence (strong, sudden need to urinate), the pessary realigns the bladder in its normal position, allowing it to empty better.

## What happens after the fitting?

After the first fitting, you'll need to go back to your health care provider's office in a few days to have the pessary rechecked. After that, you may be checked every few weeks, then every 2 to 3 months as long as you have the pessary. If you experience inadequate relief of symptoms, be sure to report that to your provider. Over time the pessary may need to be changed to a different size or shape.

## Once my pessary is in place, what about cleaning?

Your cleaning schedule is based on the type of prolapse you have, the amount of vaginal discharge, and the specific type of pessary. There are two options:

- A. You may return to your provider's office every 2 to 3 months for a regularly scheduled pessary change. Many older women elect for this option.
- B. If you feel comfortable with the pessary, you may remove and clean it yourself once instructed in the proper insertion and removal technique. After you have removed your pessary, wash it with mild soap, rinse well with tap water and air dry. EvaCare pessaries fold or compress to ease insertion. A small amount of lubricant may be used. Apply it at the introitus (vaginal opening) and use non-lubricated fingers to insert.



You should return to your provider to have the pessary checked once or twice a year. Generally your pessary will be replaced with a new one after one year of use.

When you are not wearing your pessary, store it in a clean, dry place. Your pessary should be used only by the person for whom it was prescribed.

## What else do I need to know about the care of the pessary?

The vagina is not sterile so the pessary needs only to be kept clean (per instructions above). Pessaries have a long usage life and can remain in place for 8 to 12 weeks. A slight discoloration of the pessary is normal.

If you are menopausal and not on estrogen, you should discuss vaginal estrogen with your provider. It thickens the tissues of the vagina and keeps it healthy which prevents complications related to pessary use.

## Can the pessary get lost in the vagina?

No, the pessary cannot get lost. The vagina is like an open pocket extending only 3 to 4 inches into the body. The pessary can change its position within the vagina or fall out if it is too small or if there is undo straining during a bowel movement. If that happens, or if the pessary is uncomfortable or you can feel the pessary at the opening of the vaginal area, do one of two things:

1. Insert your fingers into the vagina, grasp the pessary and gently pull it down and out. Removal is usually best done lying flat with your knees bent (less gravity) and your legs apart.  
Push it back in. Reach into your vagina until you touch the pessary. Simply push the pessary in as deep as you can.

If your pessary falls out and you are unable to reinsert it, clean the device as instructed previously. Place it in a plastic bag to take with you when you return to your provider's office.

## What problems should I be concerned about?

The pessary may push against other pelvic structures and can sometimes cause trouble with urination, difficulty with bowel movements, or lower back pain. Report any of these to your health care provider right away, as well as:

- Any increase in urinary incontinence
- Any vaginal pressure or discomfort
- Any vaginal bleeding, burning or itching
- Any vaginal sores
- If the pessary falls out frequently
- If you notice changes in the color, amount, consistency or odor of vaginal discharge. (A creamy discharge is normal.)

## Is the pessary also a contraceptive device?

No. It is important to understand that the pessary is not a contraceptive device like the diaphragm. Intercourse is possible with those pessaries that do not fill the vagina, such as the ring. Some other types of pessaries must be removed before intercourse. Contact your clinician for instructions regarding your pessary.

## What about medical tests and my pessary?

A pessary must be removed for a pap smear and prior to a colonoscopy. Some pessaries have a small amount of metal and must be removed prior to an MRI. If you are unsure, please contact your health care provider.