

This leaflet should only be used by specific individuals along with a physiotherapy assessment. If you have any concerns, please contact your physiotherapist.

Physiotherapy for prolapse

Information for patients

What is a prolapse?

Prolapse may feel like something coming down, a lump or bulge or a dragging feeling in the vagina. It may go away when you lie down, but you may find it gets worse by the end of the day.

The contents of your pelvis (your bowel, bladder and uterus) are held in place by ligaments, fascia and your pelvic floor muscles. If any of these structures become weak then problems may occur.

Types of prolapse

A **rectocele** is a bulging of the rectum against the back of the wall of the vagina.

A **cystocele** is a bulging of the bladder against the front wall of the vagina.

A **uterine prolapse** occurs when the uterus and cervix move downwards into the vagina, weakening the vagina walls.

Why do people get prolapse?

Some reasons why this may happen:

- Family history
- Pregnancy and childbirth
- Chronic constipation
- Being overweight
- Smoking
- Long term cough
- Heavy lifting at work or at home
- Menopause
- Pelvic surgery
- Getting older if you do not keep exercising your muscles
- High impact exercises (e.g. running, jumping and trampoline).

What are the symptoms?

Some women with prolapse may have no symptoms. Symptoms of prolapse can include:

- Low back pain
- Discomfort on prolonged standing or walking
- Discomfort during sex
- Going to the toilet more often
- Sudden need to pass urine
- Leaking urine when you cough or sneeze
- It may be difficult to empty your bowel completely.

What can I do to help myself?

- Try to stand for only a short time and change your position often
- Pace your activities – do not try to do too much at one time
- Try to avoid heavy lifting where possible as this will cause less strain
- If you are overweight, try to lose some weight
- Straining to empty your bowel can make your prolapse worse. Try to eat the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables each day and try to drink 1½-2 litres of fluid every day (water is best)
- Adapting the correct position for the toilet (as advised by your physiotherapist) can also help reduce straining. After you think you are finished take a few seconds to rock forward, sit back, move side to side or even stand up, sit down to ensure you are finished and avoid leaking urine when you walk away
- If you smoke try to stop, or cut down
- Some exercise like jogging or high impact aerobics may make your prolapse feel worse. You could try swimming, Pilates, yoga, walking or cycling instead
- Regular pelvic floor exercises may help to prevent the problem getting worse and make your symptoms better.

Pelvic floor exercises

Try to do your pelvic floor exercises in different positions e.g. lying, sitting, standing and in positions where you leak.

1. Gently squeeze and pull up your pelvic floor muscles.
Hold for _____ seconds (max 10). Repeat _____ times (max 10).
2. Next gently squeeze and pull up your pelvic floor muscles, just for a second before relaxing
Try to do _____ (max 10).

Do these 2 exercises _____ times per day (max 5).

Tips to help you with your exercises

- Do your exercises at the same time of day. For example, link them to household tasks or mealtimes.
- Exercise in different positions like lying, sitting, standing and walking
- Pull up your pelvic floor muscles as hard as you can immediately before you do something that makes you feel your prolapse more
- See your physiotherapist regularly to help you with your exercises.
- Consider using the 'NHS Squeezy' app <https://squeezyapp.com/>
- If you have further questions or concerns, please discuss them with your physiotherapist.

