

Vaginal pessary fact sheet

What is a pessary?

A pessary (a small plastic or silicone support) is placed inside your vagina to hold up the prolapsed organ. Pessaries don't fix prolapses but they can reduce the symptoms of prolapse and help you live more comfortably.

Pessaries are easy to insert through your vagina. No anesthetic is required and you shouldn't be able to feel your pessary once it has been inserted.

After the pessary has been inserted, you can resume all of your normal day to day activity, including sexual activity. There is no risk of the pessary being lost inside you.

It can take a little while to find the correct size pessary, so don't be discouraged if you have to return to have a different size fitted. Please contact us if you don't have a review booked and your pessary falls out, or is causing discomfort, and you're unable to remove it yourself.

Some people are also prescribed vaginal oestrogen by their doctor to help manage their symptoms and help make the pessary comfortable and safe.

How to self- manage your pessary

If you are self-managing your pessary, we recommend removing it, washing it with warm, soapy water and replacing it around once a week. Many women find this easy to manage with a little practice.

If you prefer not to self-manage, a Family Planning Tasmania doctor or nurse can review and manage your pessary every 4-6 months.

Removing your pessary

To remove your pessary, simply place a clean index finger up inside your vagina and find the rim of your pessary. It may help to stand with one foot up on a stool and the other on the ground.

Gently hook your finger under or over the rim. Tilt the pessary slightly so it's slanted down a little bit and gently pull down until it's out of the vagina.

Cleaning your pessary

You should wash your pessary with antibacterial or liquid soap and water only. Store it somewhere clean until you are ready to use it again.

It is normal for your pessary to become discoloured. If your pessary is showing signs of cracking or becoming less flexible, it is probably time to replace it with a new pessary.

Reinserting your pessary

Your doctor will show you how to re-insert your pessary. Some women find it easiest to stand with one foot up on a stool and the other on the ground. Others prefer to insert it while lying flat on a bed.

1. Hold the pessary firmly between your fingers and thumb and fold it in half. The curved part should be facing the ceiling.
2. You may want to place a small amount of water-soluble lubricant on the pessary edge that will be inserted first into your vagina.
3. Hold the pessary in your dominant hand and spread the lips of your vulva apart with your other hand.
4. Gently push the folded pessary as far as you can into the vagina. It should be inserted lengthwise.
5. Release the pessary once inside, letting it unfold.
6. If it doesn't feel comfortable, use an index finger to gently push it in a little further.
7. It's ok to be able to feel the end of the ring with your finger.

Ongoing management of your pessary

Please make sure you put your hand over your vagina when you open your bowels for the first time. Don't panic if your pessary falls out; please contact us if this happens. If your pessary shifts position or comes out (for example, in the toilet), you can retrieve it, clean it and reinsert it.

Even if you are successfully self-managing your pessary, please see us again for review in 4-6 months.

Some increased discharge is normal but please contact us if you experience vaginal bleeding, pain, itching or discharge with an unpleasant odour.