

PELVIC ORGAN PROLAPSE (POP)

What Does Pelvic Organ Prolapse Mean?

The pelvic organs, which includes the bladder, vagina, uterus, and bowel, are held in place by the pelvic floor muscles and supporting connective tissues such as 'fascia' and 'ligaments.'

These help to join the pelvic organs to the bony side walls of the pelvis and keep them in place.

Your pelvic floor muscles support the pelvic organs from underneath.

If the supporting tissues are torn or stretched, and you're the pelvic floor muscles are weak, then the pelvic organs may not be held in their right place.

Pelvic organ prolapse (POP), occurs when one of the pelvic organs sags and may bulge or protrude into the vagina.

Often activities such as coughing, sneezing, carrying something heavy, or being on your feet all day can increase awareness and sensations of the prolapse.

Women who have a prolapse generally describe sensations of vaginal heaviness, pressure, or something being inside of their vagina (like a tampon).

Other common symptoms include:

- Lower back pain
- Difficulty emptying your bladder or bowel
- Sexual problems
- Recurrent urinary tract infections

HOW CAN PHYSIO HELP?

Pelvic Floor muscle re-training:

Women's Health physiotherapists are specifically trained to assess the strength of your pelvic floor muscles.

They can help to train your pelvic floor muscles to be strong and work to support the prolapse throughout the day.

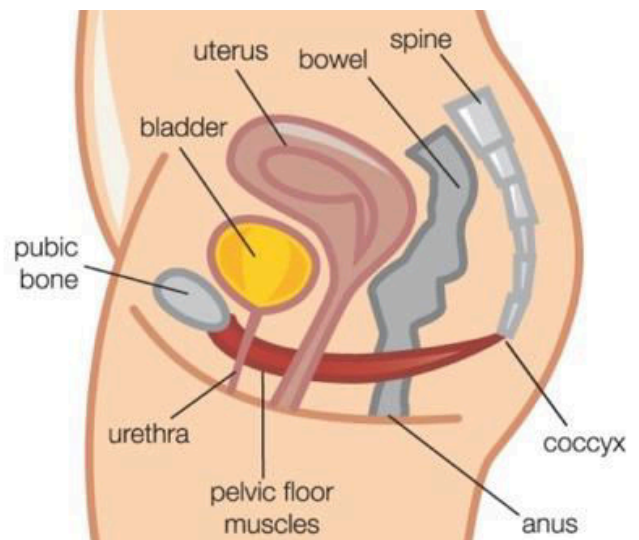
Exercise and lifestyle modifications:

To prevent further progression of the prolapse talk to your Women's Health physiotherapist about strategies to avoid chronic constipation and be mindful of correct lifting and exercise techniques to minimise pressure on your pelvic floor.

Pessary fitting:

Some specially trained Women's Health physiotherapists can fit pessaries to manage prolapse.

Pessaries are vaginal support inserts that work to lift and support the prolapse.



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What Is the Cause Of Prolapse?

Childbirth is the main cause of a prolapse. On the way through the vagina, the baby can stretch and tear the supporting tissues and pelvic floor muscles.

The more vaginal births you have, the more likely you are to have a prolapse. Other causes of prolapse can include persistent coughing with a chronic lung condition, such as smoker's cough, bronchitis or asthma, lifting very heavy weights and/or chronic constipation with persistent straining to empty the bowel.



Different Types Of Proplapse

There are different types of prolapse, and it is important to have any prolapse properly assessed.

Pelvic organs may:

- Bulge into the front wall of the vagina (anterior wall prolapse/cystocele)
- Through the back vaginal wall (posterior wall prolapse/rectocele)
- Or the uterus may drop down into the vagina (uterine prolapse)

Treatment options for prolapse vary and the right option for you will depend on a few things such as:

- Which structure is prolapsed?
- How big is the prolapse?
- How much does it bother you?