

# Vaginal Pessary

## What is a vaginal pessary?

A vaginal pessary is a device inserted into the vagina (birth canal) to help support the vaginal walls and pelvic organs. The pessary presses against the walls of the vagina. It helps to keep the pelvic organs in place so you have less discomfort. It may help prevent leaking of urine.

A pessary may be made of silicone or plastic. It may be a round or egg-shaped ring, it may look more like a donut, or it may be other shapes, like a mushroom. Some types of pessaries can be put into the vagina and then filled with air or water. They may be easier to insert.

## When is it used?

A vaginal pessary is a nonsurgical way to treat problems caused by weak pelvic muscles, such as:

- A uterus that has fallen out of place and down into the birth canal
- Leaking of urine from the bladder
- Bulging of the bladder down into the vagina
- Bulging of the rectum into the vagina

A pessary may be used temporarily before surgical treatment for some of these problems, allowing you to schedule surgery at a convenient time. It can also give your healthcare provider more time to treat any vaginal infections or to build up the vaginal tissue lining with estrogen cream to help healing after surgery.

Your healthcare provider can fit you with a pessary that is right for you. Your provider will insert the pessary into your vagina or show you how to insert it yourself. Be sure to follow your provider's instructions regarding its care. This includes removing and cleaning it as often as your provider recommends and having regular checkups with your provider.

The pessary may stretch the vaginal walls so that the vagina gets bigger after some time. If this happens, you will need to see your provider to be refitted for a larger pessary.

## What problems can pessaries cause?

You may not be able to have sexual intercourse while the pessary is in your vagina.

Pessaries may cause:

- Irritation of the vagina
- Vaginal discomfort
- Infections of the vagina
- Small sores in the vagina, which might cause bleeding or a discharge with an odor

These problems may happen if you have gone through menopause. After menopause your vaginal lining is thinner and more easily injured. These problems can be prevented by using estrogen cream in the vagina to make the lining thicker and healthier.

Ask your healthcare provider:

- How long you will need to use the pessary
- What activities you should avoid
- How to take care of yourself at home and when you can return to your normal activities
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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