

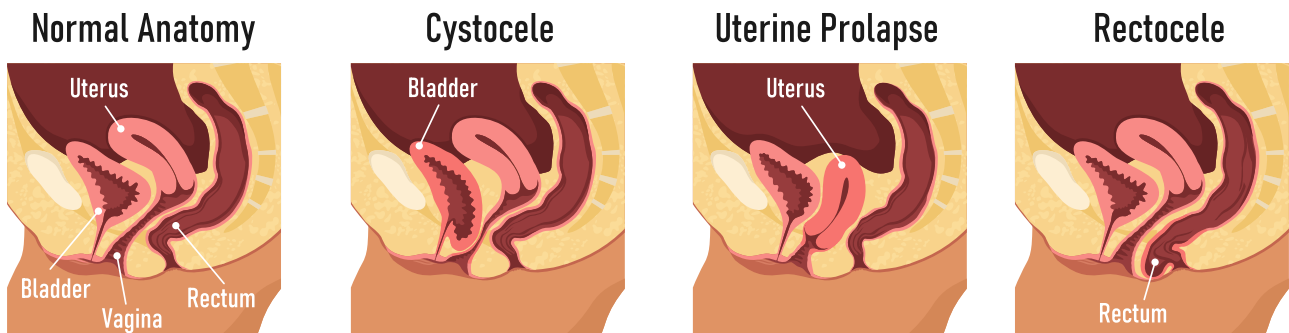
Prolapse and Pregnancy

What is a prolapse?

A prolapse sounds absolutely scary! It makes it sound like your organs are about to fall out of your vagina and onto the floor!

Essentially a prolapse is the descent/movement of the pelvic organs into the vagina, with associated symptoms of vaginal heaviness, aching or bulging. A prolapse can occur to the bladder/cystocele (most common), bowel/rectocele or uterus/uterine.

TYPES OF PELVIC ORGAN PROLAPSE



Pregnancy and childbirth are the most common causes of prolapse and around 1 in 2 women who have even been pregnant or given birth will experience a prolapse. It's important to remember that a lot of women will experience movement/laxity of their pelvic organs with age, pregnancy and birth, and many do not experience any symptoms, therefore we no longer classify them as having a prolapse, just some movement/laxity of the vaginal walls.

What causes a prolapse?

- Pregnancy
- Childbirth
- Family history (big risk factor for prolapse if you have had a mother, grandmother or aunty have a prolapse. Its usually a sign that you have more stretchy and weaker connective tissue which places you at high risk of the pelvic organs descending over time)
- Chronic constipation and straining
- Repeated heavy lifting
- Chronic coughing e.g. Asthma, Cystic Fibrosis

Can I fix my prolapse?

Yes and No

For the vast majority of women, pelvic floor exercises can reduce the stage of prolapse and symptoms by helping to support the pelvic organs and prevent them from descending further down into the vagina.

If you have symptoms of prolapse and you wish to exercise a pessary is a device that can be inserted into the vagina which acts similar to a ankle or knee brace which can help lift up and support the organs. Overtime it is possible that the pessary along with pelvic floor exercises can reduce the symptoms and also reduce the stage of prolapse and hopefully make you completely symptom free.

The good news is that most women with a prolapse during pregnancy do not notice their symptoms, as the growing uterus lifts up the organs higher and there is more oestrogen which plumps up your muscles.

Can I still get pregnant with a prolapse?

Absolutely! There is no reason why you would not be able to get pregnant and carry a baby to term with a prolapse. If you have concerns about your prolapse and your ability to carry a baby, speaking with your Obstetrician/Gynecologist can be a reassuring way to get advice about the medical management pre conception and during your pregnancy.

For some women we use a vaginal pessary to help reduce their symptoms of prolapse during pregnancy.

Can I have a vaginal delivery with a prolapse?

The great new is that having a vaginal delivery is possible with a prolapse. The research so far indicates that subsequent vaginal births don't seem to result in pelvic floor muscle tears or further prolapse. There is a slight risk that having a subsequent vaginal deliveries may worsen your existing prolapse, but we don't actually know because birth is very unpredictable. Clinically I tend to find that most women experience no further worsening of their prolapses with subsequent vaginal deliveries.

It is important that if you are concerned about your prolapse, birth or delivery method that you discuss this with your Midwife, Doctor or Obstetrician. I can provide you with an assessment of your prolapse, muscle function and risk factors for pelvic floor dysfunction to help you with your informed decision on birthing method.

Remember its your birth, your body and your choice on how you birth.