

**PESSARY AFTER CARE**

**1) WHAT IS A PESSARY?**

A pessary is a device made from medical-grade silicone that is inserted in the vagina to help support the bladder, uterus, or rectum. It is used to help with pelvic organ prolapses and occasionally, bladder incontinence.

**2) WHAT HAPPENS AT THE BLADDER CARE CENTRE – PESSARY CLINIC?**

Your pessary nurse will ask you multiple questions with regards to your prolapse and will perform a vaginal examination to determine what type of prolapse you have and it's position. Because there are multiple types of pessaries available, the pessary nurse may take several tries to find the appropriate size for you. The pessary nurse will ask you to walk, drink water, urinate, and scan your bladder while the pessary is inside you. Furthermore, the nurse will teach you how to insert and remove your pessary, as well as self-care. A properly fitted pessary shouldn't cause pain or discomfort; you should be able to do your normal activities without any difficulty.

**3) HOW DO I CARE FOR MY PESSARY?**

The Bladder Care Centre pessary nurses recommend that you take your pessary out and clean it every 1-14 days; depending on the amount of discharge and odor coming from the vagina, you may clean it more often if you wish. You should use a mild soap with water, rinse it well, and dry it completely. Then reinsert the pessary into the vagina the next morning. When cleaning your pessary, make sure to assess the device for rough edges/spots, unusual dents or discoloration, and if your pessary is starting to look worn out. Cleaning your pessary on a regular basis reduces the risk of complications. It is not uncommon to experience an increase in vaginal discharge when using a pessary; BUT if you notice an unpleasant odor, you will need to see your doctor.

**Remember to NEVER leave pessary in longer than 3 months without cleaning your pessary.**

**4) HOW TO INSERT AND REMOVE MY PESSARY?**

**INSERTION:** wash your hands with soap and water. Put a small amount of water-soluble jelly or KY jelly on your finger and put this inside your vagina. Then wash your hands with soap and water again. Either lie down or stand with one foot on a footstool; stay as relaxed as possible. Separate your labia, or skin around your vaginal opening, to allow access to the vaginal opening. Insert the folded pessary, and push up past the pubic bone, as far as you can go without feeling discomfort. Wash your hands.

**REMOVAL:** wash your hands with soap and water. Stay as relaxed as possible, then lift one leg and put it on a footstool/or squat down. Insert your index finger into the vagina, find the rim of the pessary, and then hook your finger under rim. Bear down like you are going to have a bowel movement, then grab your pessary, pull it down and out towards your anus. The pessary will not entirely fold up, but your vaginal wall will stretch to allow for removal. Ensure to be careful if you have long fingernails. Try to leave the pessary out overnight at least once a week. Store it aware from children and pets, in a clean container that's not airtight.

➤ NOTE: Your healthcare provider may use a string tied around your pessary to make removal easier.

**5) WILL MY PESSARY MOVE, SHIFT, OR FALL OUT?**

It is not unusual for the pessary to fall out of your vagina when you are having a bowel movement. You may prevent this from happening by holding your hand at the vaginal opening when you're having a bowel movement; this will support your pelvic floor and prevent the pessary

from falling out. Another way to keep your pessary in is to insert your index finger inside your vaginal while having a bowel movement. Another way to prevent your pessary from falling in the toilet is to remove your pessary before going to the bathroom.

- **NOTE:** always CHECK THE TOILET before you flush, just in case your pessary fell out during your bowel movement and/or after you have urinated. If the pessary does fall into the toilet, clean it with mild soap and water, then sock it for 20 minutes in rubbing alcohol. After this, sock it for 20 minutes in water, and wash again with soap and water.
- Rinse it well and dry it completely. You may then insert it in the vagina. The pessary can also shift positions if you are exercising, lifting heavy objects, have constipation, or straining on the toilet, and if you're walking a lot.
  - Avoid activities that put pressure on your pelvic muscles, such as heavy lifting, running on concrete, etc.
  - Talk to your pelvic floor physiotherapist about Kegels and preventing your prolapse from worsening. Continuing your pelvic floor exercises with your doctor or pelvic floor physio can help with the management of your prolapse.

**6) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

- Peri and post-menopausal women may need estrogen cream/tablets to help with dryness and irritation caused by the pessary device.
- Depending on the type of pessary you have, you may be able to leave the pessary in during sexual intercourse.
- Your pessary needs to be replaced approximately every 5 years.
- You may use a pessary while in an airport; it will not set off alarms.
- If you need to have an X-ray or MRI, you should take your pessary out, since some pessaries contain metal components and must be removed prior to your MRI/X-ray. You must inform the technician about your pessary.

**7) SIDE EFFECTS?**

Possible COMPLICATIONS from wearing a pessary include: abrasions, erosions, infections, irritations, bleeding, pressure-sores, foul-smelling discharge, urinary tract infections, and fistulas (an opening between the vagina and the colon/ or bladder).

**8) HOW OFTEN DO I HAVE TO VISIT THE DOCTOR FOR MAINTENANCE?**

**You MUST see a family doctor or another health care provider every 3-6 months for vaginal checks, and pessary MAINTENANCE.**

- Your doctor, or pessary nurse, or pelvic floor physiotherapist, must ASSESS your vaginal canal to ensure the pessary has not caused any scratches, sores, or irritations.
- Gaining or losing more than 10 pounds can affect the fit of your pessary; you may need to contact your doctor to have an assessment.

**9) NOTIFY YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR/UROLOGIST/URO-GYNECOLOGIST IMMEDIATELY, IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING HAPPENS:**

- Vaginal bleeding
- Pain, pressure to the vaginal area
- Itching and irritation to the vaginal area
- Foul smelling pink or bloody vaginal discharge
- Not being about to urinate or have a bowel movement
- Swelling, cramps and tenderness to lower abdomen
- Chills and/or fever with a temperature higher than 38°C or 101°F
- Your pessary keeps falling out; or you cannot remove or reinsert it
- These could be signs that your pessary doesn't fit correctly, and you need a different pessary. You may need to have your pessary removed by your healthcare provider, to let the vaginal walls.

TYPE OF PESSARY YOU HAVE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ ( \_\_\_\_\_ mm)

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_