



DECISION AID

Uterine prolapse:

What are my treatment options?

If you are reading this, you have probably been diagnosed with a uterine prolapse. That means that your womb has slipped down a lot from its normal position and may already be bulging out of your vagina. Your bladder and bowel may have slipped down too because all of these pelvic organs are connected to each other.

There are various treatment options for uterine prolapse. They aim to reduce symptoms caused by the prolapse, such as bladder problems, feelings of pressure and pain in the vagina. Your doctor may also have advised you to have surgery to remove your womb and stabilize your pelvic floor. But it usually isn't necessary to remove the womb.

The aim of this decision aid is to help you choose a suitable treatment together with your doctors.

THESE ARE THE TREATMENT OPTIONS:

Without surgery

- Pelvic floor exercises
- Vaginal pessary

Surgery

- without removing the womb
- including removal of the womb

You can read about the pros and cons of these treatments on the next page.

PERSONAL DECISION

This short decision aid probably won't include all of the information that you need. You will still need to talk to a doctor, but the decision aid can help you. Your treatment decision will depend on various things, including

- which symptoms the treatment should improve, and how distressing the symptoms are,
- how old you are,
- whether you wish to have any (more) children,
- whether you would like to keep your womb,
- which organs have slipped down, and how far,
- how effective non-surgical treatments are,
- whether you have urine leakage problems and
- whether you have any other medical conditions.

IMPORTANT:

Don't let anyone force you to choose a certain treatment! Even if you find the symptoms very distressing, take the time to gather information and make the right decision for you.

PROS AND CONS OF PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES AND PESSARIES

	Pelvic floor exercises	Vaginal pessaries
What does the treatment involve?	Pelvic floor exercises strengthen the muscles that support organs like the womb and bladder. The exercises take a few minutes and are done 1 to 3 times per day.	Vaginal pessaries are small cubes, rings or saucer-shaped devices made of rubber or silicone. They are inserted into the vagina with the aim of supporting the organs in the pelvis.
Does it help?	Pelvic floor exercises mainly help to reduce urine leakage. Doing the exercises regularly can improve these symptoms, but it doesn't always help enough. It hardly affects the position of the organs.	Bladder and bowel problems may improve. Some women are able to delay or avoid surgery. About half of all women who use pessaries continue to use them for at least several years.
What are the possible side effects?	Pelvic floor exercises usually don't have any side effects.	Pressure sores and constipation may occur. Using a pessary may make sex uncomfortable or impossible. But you can take cube pessaries out and put them back in yourself.
Who is this treatment suitable for?	Pelvic floor exercises mainly help women who have a mild to moderate prolapse.	Most women can try out a pessary. But it isn't always possible to find one that fits well.

PROS AND CONS OF THE SURGICAL TREATMENTS

Type of surgery	Surgery that doesn't remove the womb	Surgery that removes the womb
What happens during the operation?	The womb is lifted up and attached to the sacrum or coccyx (tailbone) using synthetic mesh.	The womb is completely removed. The top end of the vagina is lifted and attached to the sacrum or coccyx (tailbone).
Does surgery help?	After surgery, about 90 out of 100 women no longer have problems such as urine leakage and pain during sex.	
Is the womb likely to slip down again?	In about 30 out of 100 women, organs slip down again within a few years.	
What are the possible side effects?	Surgery leads to bladder or bowel injuries in 2 out of 100 women. There are also general risks associated with surgery, such as infections or wound-healing problems.	
Could I still have children after the treatment?	Yes. But women who wish to have (more) children are advised to have the surgery afterwards, if possible.	No. But you can still have sex.
Who is this treatment suitable for?	For most women who have uterine prolapse but no other womb-related health problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For women who don't want any (more) children. • For women who have other womb-related health problems too.

HELP WITH YOUR DECISION

You may still be unsure about which treatment you would prefer. You can write down your thoughts and questions on the following two pages.

Which treatment would I consider?		What do I like about it?	What don't I like about it?
Pelvic floor exercises	<input type="radio"/>		
Vaginal pessary	<input type="radio"/>		
Surgery that doesn't remove the womb	<input type="radio"/>		
Surgery that removes the womb	<input type="radio"/>		
No treatment	<input type="radio"/>		

If you still aren't sure: What else do you need in order to make a decision?

With all the different pros and cons to consider, it can be hard to choose a treatment. One advantage of pelvic floor exercises and pessaries is that you can try them out first. If they don't help, surgery is still an option.

If you need more help:

- You will find links to further information on the next page.
- You can talk to your doctor again.
- You can also talk to a different doctor. You will find information about this option on the next page, too
- You can talk about it with your friends and family.
- Or you can contact a patient information center or a support group.



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You will find in-depth information about the following topics on the internet:

- Pelvic organ prolapse and the treatment options:
www.informedhealth.org/prolapse

Preparing for the doctor's appointment

Do you still have any questions? What are you most concerned about? Write down any questions or thoughts you may have, and take this decision aid with you to the appointment. You can ask the doctor about anything you would like to know or discuss anything you are worried about.

You will find a list of questions – and can choose those that are most important to you – here:

- www.informedhealth.org/questions

Publishing details

This decision aid was developed by the Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG, Germany). You will find information about our work and the sources used here:

- www.informedhealth.org/our-approach

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