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Home Illnesses and conditions Sexual and reproductive Pelvic organ prolapse Pelvic organ prolapse is when one or more of the pelvic organs (your womb, bladder or bowel) slip from their usual position. This causes the vaginal wall to bulge into, or out of, the vagina. Pelvic organ prolapse isn’t life-threatening. In some cases it can cause little or no problems. However, in more severe cases, it may feel very uncomfortable. It might stop you doing the things that you enjoy, and affect your quality of life. Like incontinence, prolapse isn’t inevitable part of ageing. Speak to your doctor if you think you might have a prolapse. You don’t need to suffer or feel embarrassed. Many women can experience prolapse, but it can be treated. Some women with a pelvic organ prolapse don’t have any symptoms at all. The condition may only discovered during an internal examination for another reason. For example, during a cervical screening test (smear test). Other women will experience symptoms. It’s normal for your symptoms to feel more or less severe at different times of the day. You think you might have a prolapse or you have symptoms of a prolapse such as: A prolapse is a common condition. Seeing your doctor earlier may help you manage it more easily. Your doctor will need to carry out a pelvic examination, which will include an internal examination of your vagina. Your doctor will discuss this with you and you can ask any questions that you might have. As this is an intimate examination, the doctor may have another person (chaperone) present. You can ask for a female doctor or health professional if you prefer. The internal examination is similar to a smear test and should only take a few minutes. Your doctor will discuss with you if they think any further tests are needed. Pelvic organ prolapse can affect the front, top or back of vagina. The main types of prolapse are: You can have more than one of these types of prolapse at the same time. A number system of 1 to 4 is usually used to describe how severe a pelvic organ prolapse is. For example, a 4 means a severe prolapse. You can ask your healthcare professional what this means for you, and any other questions you may have. There isn’t usually one cause, but the risk of developing pelvic organ prolapse is increased by: There are things you can do to reduce the risk of pelvic organ prolapse. Treatment will depend on how much the issue is affecting your normal day to day activities. In mild cases of prolapse, your doctor may recommend lifestyle changes. For example, regular pelvic floor exercises and maintaining a healthy weight. A vaginal pessary is a device inserted into your vagina, which holds your vaginal walls in place and so pushes the prolapse back. Pessaries are usually made of latex (rubber) or silicone, and come in different shapes and sizes.