

## Overview

### Vaginal mesh implants

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Vaginal mesh implant surgery is a type of treatment for stress urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse. The mesh is sometimes called a sling, tape or ribbon.

### What is vaginal mesh

Vaginal mesh is a type of surgical mesh. This is a net-like material used to support tissues that are weakened or damaged. For example, surgical mesh is used in hernia repair.

The mesh is usually made from a type of non-absorbable plastic and is meant to be a permanent implant.

### Pause on vaginal mesh surgery

Vaginal mesh is approved by regulatory authorities. But in 2017 a group of women reported complications after having the surgery. Most of the problems came from the mesh eroding (wearing) through pelvic tissue.

Ireland's chief medical officer published a report on the use of vaginal mesh implants. The HSE paused vaginal mesh surgery in 2018.

We will update this information if or when the surgery can start again.

[Pause on vaginal mesh implants](#)

### What vaginal mesh implants are used for

Vaginal mesh has been used to treat 2 conditions in women:

- stress urinary incontinence

- pelvic organ prolapse

Your doctor inserts the mesh through your vagina (transvaginal) or abdomen (transabdominal).

## Stress urinary incontinence

Stress urinary incontinence is where you leak urine when you cough, laugh, sneeze or exercise. It affects about 1 in 5 women. It can happen at any age, but is more common in women over 50.

Stress incontinence usually happens if your pelvic floor muscles are weak or damaged. Other muscles at the opening of your bladder may also be weak. These are called the urethral sphincters. Pelvic floor muscles and urethral sphincters control your bladder.

[Stress incontinence and ways to treat it](#)

## Mesh surgery and stress incontinence

Your doctor inserts a strip of mesh (implant) to help support your urethra. This takes pressure off your pelvic floor, sphincter muscles and bladder, and stops leaking. The urethra is the tube that carries urine out of your body.

## Pelvic organ prolapse

Pelvic organ prolapse is when your pelvic organs (uterus, bladder or rectum) move out of their normal position. They press against the walls of your vagina. Sometimes you can feel or see a bulge coming out of your vagina.

There are different ways of treating pelvic organ prolapse.

These include non-surgical options such as:

- pelvic floor exercises
- hormone treatment
- vaginal pessaries

Your doctor may talk to you about surgery if other options do not work or your prolapse is severe.

## Mesh surgery and pelvic organ prolapse

Vaginal mesh surgery for pelvic organ prolapse is where your doctor uses a mesh implant to reinforce weak tissues in the vaginal wall. Over time, the tissue grows into the pores of the mesh, giving more support.

[Pelvic organ prolapse and ways to treat it](#)

## Alternative treatments to mesh surgery

Vaginal mesh implant surgery is not currently available in Ireland. It may become available again.

Other treatment options are available.

These include:

- pelvic floor exercises
- pessaries
- bladder training
- surgery with tissue slings

## If you want to have mesh surgery

Your doctor may talk to you about mesh surgery if other options have not worked or your condition is very bad.

If you are waiting for mesh surgery, there are things you can do to [ease symptoms while you wait](#).

## Complications after vaginal mesh surgery

Complications from mesh surgery include infection, bleeding and injury to organs. Symptoms can range from mild to severe.

If you have complications or you are worried about complications, you can:

- go to your GP
- contact the consultant who did the surgery
- email the [hospital group](#) where you had the surgery

### [Complications from vaginal mesh implants](#)

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