

INFORMATION SHEET
FOR SELF CARE OF
VAGINAL SHELF PESSARIES

This is advice written in response to difficulties attending GP surgeries or hospital clinics during 2020.

1. Patients are encouraged to consider self-management of their vaginal pessary.
2. Low dose vaginal oestrogen cream or vaginal tablet – Vagifem used once per week is helpful to maintain good vaginal wall health.
3. To obtain a prescription for vaginal oestrogen please telephone your General Practice Surgery and they will arrange for the cream or vaginal tablet to be available for collection from a local chemist.
4. A correctly fitting pessary can be retained within the vagina for up to 24 months without needing any attention.
5. We have a new **soft** pessary which is designed for patients to remove and replace by themselves more easily.
6. The standard SHELF pessary is firm and can be removed by placing a finger in the vagina, finding the rudder of the shelf and pulling gently down. Sometimes you might need to hook your finger over the top to ease it down. The pelvic floor needs to be relaxed when the shelf is being pulled down. It is helpful to twist it as you pull. There is often a little bit more space when it is nearly in the midline.
7. Perfect self-management of pessaries involves removing and leaving it out overnight once per fortnight, replacing it the following morning. Such patients will often be using vaginal oestrogen cream once weekly if they are over the age of 50 and no longer menstruating.
8. Any patient who wishes to try self-management should contact telephone number 01792 285688 or 01792 530885. We will then arrange for a new type soft pessary to be posted to the house.
9. When the pessary has arrived, at a time convenient, the current pessary should be gently removed. This would normally be in the evening. Take some time to feel how the pessary is lying in your vagina as this will help when fitting the new one. Discard the old pessary.
10. The following morning the new soft pessary, which will be nearly but not precisely the same size as the previous ring, can then be inserted.
11. The insertion technique is to apply a little cream over one edge of the shelf and ease it inside by holding the rudder and push it higher into the vagina so that the little groove is forward and the rudder curves a little forward.
12. Patients who are able to perform this procedure can self-manage for up to 24 months before calling at GP's surgery or hospital clinic so that the prolapse and vaginal walls be checked.
13. Any patients who have a vaginal discharge or vaginal bleeding when a pessary is in place are advised to remove the pessary and leave it out for several days until the discharge or bleeding has completely settled. This would normally be 3 to 7 days. If bleeding persists for longer than 7 days or is not steadily improving then we would advise patients to contact one of our secretaries on 01792 530885 or 01792 285688.
14. Any routine problems with pessary management can be resolved by telephoning Suite 17 (Pelvic Floor Unit) on 01792 285384.
15. Whilst wearing the pessary it is always helpful for patients to continue to perform their pelvic floor exercises as this will strengthen their pelvic support. We recognise that patients who do this may find that eventually their prolapse no longer requires the pessary to support it.
16. Patients can experiment by leaving their pessary out for several days to see whether or not their prolapse still requires support.