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Pelvic Organ Prolapse

The vagina and pelvic female organs and their surrounding structures (bladder, rectum, etc.) are attached to the pelvis bones by connective tissues such as muscle ligaments, tendons and fascia. These tissues help form walls around the vagina and ensure the functions but also that normal urinary voiding and bowel movements can occur. As the pelvic muscles and other supporting structures become weak the connective tissues can fail, allowing pelvic structures like the bladder or rectum to bulge into the vaginal wall. Pelvic Organ prolapse can worsen over time.

This can cause the following **symptoms**:

- A feeling of vaginal fullness, heaviness, or even pain
- Pain or discomfort during intercourse
- Loss of bladder control
- Involuntary urination or inconsistent urinary stream
- Difficulty with bowel movements
- Recurrent urinary infections

Common Causes:

Pelvic muscles, ligaments and connective tissues which have been weakened with age are the primary causes, but many other factors may play a role. These may include vaginal childbirth, previous vaginal surgeries, menopause, smoking, diabetes, obesity, a history of heavy lifting, chronic coughing, and chronic constipation. Sometimes pelvic organ prolapse can be caused simply by genetic factors.

What are the different types of pelvic organ prolapse?

When vaginal prolapse occurs, an organ has dropped (prolapsed) out of its normal position and can sometimes even protrude from the vagina. The definition of pelvic organ prolapse is different depending on what anatomic structure in the pelvis is pushing into the vagina, such as the bladder or rectum. When vaginal prolapse occurs, the upper part (apex) of the vagina has dropped to a lower position. It is possible for more than one organ to prolapse into the vagina at the same time.

The different types of pelvic organ prolapse:

- Cystocele
- Rectocele
- Enterocele
- Vaginal Vault Prolapse
- Uterine Prolapse

How is Pelvic Organ Prolapse Treated?

The best treatment for a specific type and severity of pelvic organ prolapse will vary from patient to patient. If your symptoms are mild, the doctor may recommend **lifestyle changes**, **Kegel** exercises to strengthen the pelvic muscles, or the use of a **pessary** to relieve the symptoms. When the symptoms are severe enough to affect your quality of life, your physician may recommend **surgery**.