

The Doctor is in

Specialist Care

The uterus is not the culprit in Pelvic Organ Prolapse

After childbirth or pregnancy, women may find themselves suffering from a condition called Pelvic Organ Prolapse (POP).

What is POP?

Pelvic organs refer to the bladder, uterus and rectum, which are located in the pelvis.

POP refers to the protrusion of any pelvic organ out of the vagina. A woman with POP would experience a sensation of discomfort due to a prominent lump protruding out of her vagina.

What causes POP?

Dr Lee Lih Charn from LC Lee Urogynaecology Centre said: "Childbirth, menopause, obesity, pelvic tumours and heavy lifting are conditions that cause the stretching, weakening, and lengthening of the tissues and ligaments supporting the pelvic organs. Over time, the pelvic organs may gradually

descend downwards and protrude out of the body, resulting in POP."

What can be done?

Management of the condition depends on the severity of the POP. Minor degrees of POP can be treated with either pelvic floor exercises or a neovaginal laser. For more severe degrees of POP, a ring pessary or surgery is recommended.

Is it necessary to remove the uterus if surgery is required for POP?

Dr Lee said: "Hysterectomy, or the removal of the uterus, has usually been advocated in the surgical treatment of POP, even when it may not have been necessary. Weakened supporting tissues, not the uterus, cause POP. Uterine-sparing procedures, or hysteropexy, are now becoming more popular."

POP reconstructive surgery aims to achieve site-specific correction of

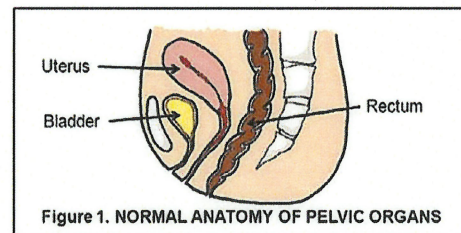


Figure 1. NORMAL ANATOMY OF PELVIC ORGANS

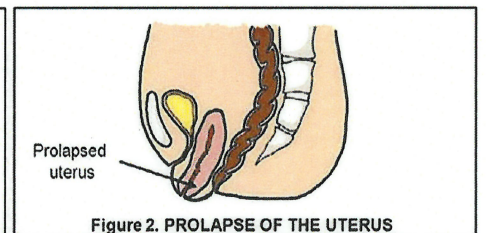


Figure 2. PROLAPSE OF THE UTERUS

Pelvic Organ Prolapse (POP) refers to the protrusion of any pelvic organ out of the vagina.

Photo: LC Lee Urogynaecology Centre

tissue defects. The removal of an otherwise normal uterus does not contribute to a successful outcome.

Therefore, it is possible to conserve the uterus during surgery. Several studies have shown that conservation of the uterus would result in a shorter operating time, less blood loss and fewer complications compared to surgery that requires a hysterectomy. Other advantages include conservation of fertility and menopause that will occur naturally.

The main disadvantage of uterine conservation is unanticipated pre-existing uterine pathology. Although the incidence of this is low, women who have uterine abnormalities or abnormal menstrual bleeding are not advised to go for this procedure.

In short, as the uterus does not cause POP, uterine-sparing surgery is possible. A thorough discussion with a gynaecologist or urogynaecologist can help to determine which surgery is best suited for you.



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 - Infertility investigation and treatment
 - Contraception & family planning
 - Minimally invasive surgery
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Urogynaecological Services

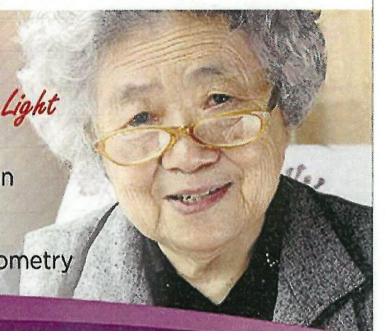
- Management & Investigation of Bladder Dysfunction
- Female urinary incontinence (Involuntary urine leakage)
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