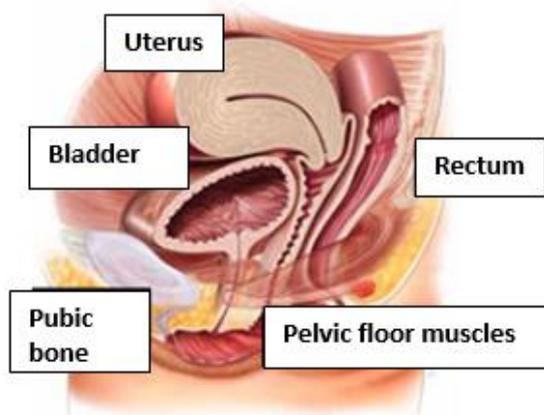


Gynecological prolapse surgery and sexuality

This guide contains information on how prolapse surgery affects sexuality. Prolapses are protrusions around the pelvis. They occur when the pelvic floor and the muscles and tissues around it fail.

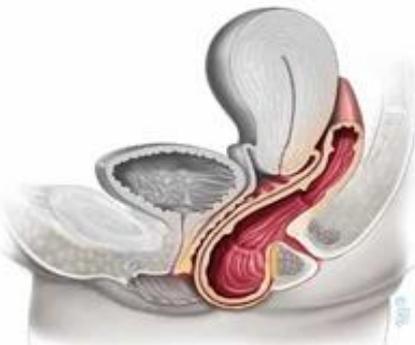
Normal pelvic floor structure



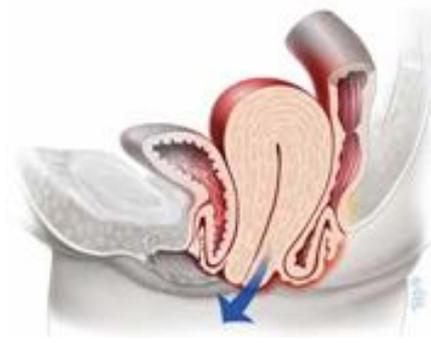
Anterior vaginal prolapse



Posterior vaginal prolapse



Uterine prolapse



Prolapse surgery

The surgery is performed either through the vagina or through the abdomen. The weak and stretched tissues are modified and strengthened during the surgery to achieve good support structure. If the prolapse is large or the prolapse has occurred before, synthetic materials, such as different meshes, can be used to help strengthen the supportive tissues.

Sexual function after the surgery

It is recommended that you do not have intercourse for 4 to 6 weeks after the surgery, after which you should start carefully and use lubrication to help things along. Most women experience that their sexual function improves or remains the same after the surgery. Fixing the prolapse will often help to achieve successful intercourse and improve the state of the mucous membrane. The urinary incontinence caused by the prolapse will usually improve. Improved genital structure can also strengthen your identity and femininity.

The prolapse surgery or the mesh that was used can at first cause loss of sensation in the operation area. The changes in sensation will however usually heal on their own with time. The suture sites in the operation area can also develop scar tissue, which can at first cause some level of pain for example during intercourse. If you experience urinary incontinence after the prolapse surgery, urinary incontinence can be improved surgically.

Ways to improve sexual function:

- Doing pelvic floor muscle exercises improves the muscles and helps prevent urinary incontinence. Pelvic floor muscles that are in good shape also increase sexual pleasure.
- You can start using a topical vaginal estrogen product 2 weeks after the surgery.
- If you experience loss of sensation in the genital area, you can stimulate them with your fingers or by using a vibrator. You can use them to stimulate the genitals and other parts of your body and look for areas which have normal sensation, and where applying vibration to the area creates pleasure. You can buy a vibrator from a pharmacy or a sex shop, and lubricants can be bought from department stores as well.
- Water or oil based lubricants are recommended especially for treating mucosal dryness and when using a vibrator.

Share your thoughts

It is helpful to discuss your feelings and thoughts about the prolapse surgery with the staff and with your intimate partner, should you have one. Sometimes it is very difficult to express how you are feeling. If you like, you can use this guide to start the conversation with your partner.

It is also possible to make an appointment where you can discuss with a sexual counsellor at the Turku and Salo Tyks hospitals.