

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you are able to support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

Repair of Prolapse

Prolapse is very common. Mild prolapse often causes no symptoms and treatment is not always necessary. However, you should see your doctor if you think you may have a prolapse.

Prolapse can affect quality of life by causing symptoms such as discomfort or a feeling of heaviness. It can cause bladder and bowel problems, and sexual activity may also be affected.

Prolapse can be reduced with various lifestyle interventions including stopping smoking, weight loss, exercise and avoiding constipation, as well as avoidance of activities that may make your prolapse worse such as heavy lifting.

Treatment options to support your prolapse include physiotherapy, pessaries and surgery.

How severe your symptoms are and whether you choose to have surgery will depend on how your prolapse affects your daily life. Not everyone with prolapse needs surgery but you may want to consider surgery if other options have not adequately helped.

Surgery for prolapse aims to support the pelvic organs and to help ease your symptoms. It cannot always cure the problem completely. There are a number of possible operations; the most suitable one for you will depend on your circumstances.

Guidance for Patients

The following may ease your symptoms and stop your prolapse from becoming worse:

Lifestyle changes:

- losing weight if you are overweight
- managing a chronic cough if you have one; stopping smoking will help
- avoiding constipation; talk to your doctor about ways of helping and treating constipation
- avoiding heavy lifting; you may wish to talk to your employer if your job involves heavy lifting
- avoiding physical activity such as trampolining or high-impact exercise.
- **Pelvic floor exercises** may help to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. You may be referred for a course of treatment to a physiotherapist who specialises in prolapse.
- **Vaginal hormone treatment (estrogen)** – if you have a mild prolapse and you have gone through the menopause; your doctor may recommend vaginal tablets or cream.

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Whilst waiting for your procedure it is important to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The **One You Kent** service provides advice and guidance on how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. You can find out more about One You Kent at:

Website: www.oneyoukent.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 1220

Email: oneyou.kent@nhs.net

The **One You smoke free** service provides a range of options to help you quit including support from an advisor, stop smoking medications, e-cigarettes and a digital offer for those who wish to quit by themselves.

<https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/one-you-kent/one-you-smokefree/>

If you are not ready to quit just yet but would like more information on how to protect your family, **NHS Better Health**, advises on how to make your home and car smoke free.

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/>

One You weight loss is a service provided in East Kent that supports adults aged 18 years, who want to lose weight or have been identified as obese. The website provides access to advice, community groups, fitness apps and provides the opportunity for you to complete a One You referral should you require more tailored advice. Find out more at <https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/one-you-kent/one-you-weight-loss/>

NHS Better Health is an additional service that provides access to free weight loss advice and includes access to a includes access to the NHS 12 week weight loss plan. The NHS 12 week fitness plan will support your weight loss plan as well as improve your health. This is aimed at beginners and will help get you into the habit of regular exercise over the course of the programme. It is structured but flexible enough to allow you to fit the exercise sessions around your other weekly commitments. Find out more at

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/>

Find out your BMI

You can get help to lead a healthier lifestyle if you're an adult (18 years or over) living in East Kent and your body mass index (BMI) is above average. Use this tool provided by NHS Better Health

(<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator/>) to find your BMI. If it's too high, sign up for a programme that will help you lose weight.

If your BMI is 30 or higher, you may qualify for free support from The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme via <https://www.england.nhs.uk/digital-weight-management/>

BMI of 28+

You can get free support from **NHS Better Health**, if your BMI is 28 or over if at least one of the following applies:

- you have Type 1 and 2 Diabetes or Metabolic Syndrome
- you have problems with your heart, circulation, hypertension or high blood pressure
- you have been diagnosed with anxiety/depression
- you need to lose weight before receiving another medical treatment or surgery
- you have a serious long-term health condition that is adversely affected by your weight such as muscular skeletal disorders (back pain, mobility issues) and asthma
- you're from a black or ethnic minority background.

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BMI of 25+

If you have a Body Mass Index of 25 or higher the One You weight loss website provides online support to help you lose weight and includes access to the NHS 12 week weight loss plan.

Healthy eating and being active

Information and advice on healthy eating and becoming more active is available from:

- **One You Eat Better** (website) - includes Easy Meals app for healthy meals and the Change4Life Food Scanner to help reduce levels of sugar in your diet.

Website - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>

- **Better Health - Get Active** (website) - includes tips on getting active for all, including the downloadable Active 10 app, as well as tailored advice for those living with a long-term condition.

Website - <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/>

- **Sugar Smart** is a campaign to raise awareness of hidden sugars, recommended levels and healthy alternatives by encouraging individuals, groups, businesses, schools, and organisation to join the campaign and make a pledge. To find out how you can join in, become sugar smart and make good choices about what you, your family, colleagues eat, please visit <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/sugar/>

Further links which may help you manage your condition whilst you await treatment;

- <https://www.patientaccess.com> (Connect to your GP services online)

- <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help>

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions>

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

The most common symptom is the sensation of a lump 'coming down'. You may also have had backache, heaviness or a dragging discomfort inside your vagina. These symptoms are often worse if you have been standing (or sitting) for a long time or at the end of the day. These symptoms often improve on lying down. You may be able to feel or see a lump or bulge. You should see your doctor if this is the case because the prolapse may become sore, ulcerated or infected.

If your bladder has prolapsed into the vagina, you may:

- experience the need to pass urine more frequently
- have difficulty in passing urine or a sensation that your bladder is not emptying properly
- leak urine when coughing, laughing or lifting heavy objects
- have frequent urinary tract infections (cystitis).

If your bowel is affected, you may experience low back pain, constipation or incomplete bowel emptying. You may need to push back the prolapse to allow stools to pass.

Sex may be uncomfortable and you may also experience a lack of sensation during intercourse.

If you have an appointment, and you feel that your symptoms are worsening, please contact your consultant's secretary via the East Kent Hospital switchboard on 01227 766877. If you are yet to receive your appointment, and you feel that your symptoms are worsening, then see your GP.

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Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

GP surgeries are still open

GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

A list of GP practices with relevant contact details are available on the following website -

<https://www.nhs.uk/Services/Trusts/GPs/DefaultView.aspx?id=154212>

Contact Us

If you have questions or concerns about your wait for surgery, you can contact the EKHUFT Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) team by telephone on 01227 783145 or email: ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net.

Alternatively, you can complete the form at

<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/news-centre/latest-news/coronavirus-latest-information-and-advice/information-for-patients-waiting-for-treatment/waiting-patients-support/>

You can also write to the Trust:

PALS

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust Headquarters

Kent and Canterbury Hospital

Ethelbert Road

Canterbury

Kent, CT1 3NG