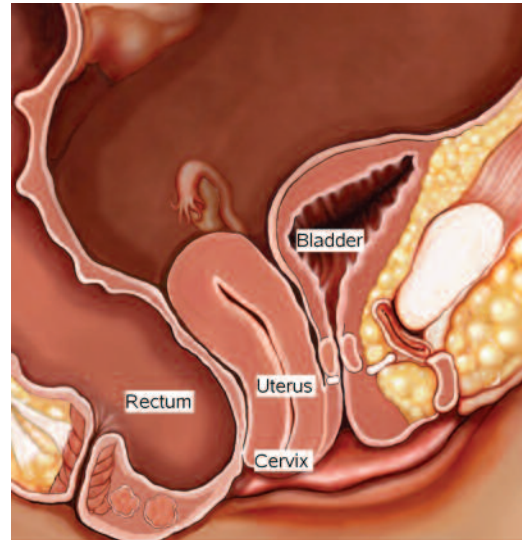
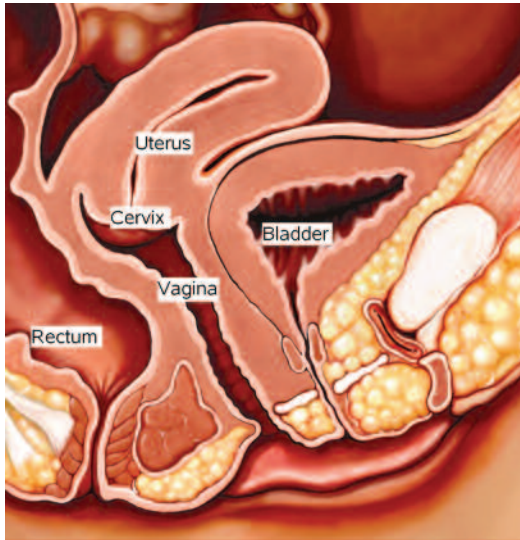


# Pelvic Organ Prolapse



Pelvic organ prolapse is a common condition affecting many millions of U.S. women. Many women and providers incorrectly refer to this condition as a dropped bladder. Specialists have moved away from this diagnosis as it implies a problem with the bladder when in fact the problem is that the vaginal supports to the bladder and other organs in the pelvis are failing. The picture below left shows a normal female pelvis from the side with the uterus, cervix, bladder, rectum and vagina labeled. The picture next to it shows the uterus falling to the opening of the vagina.



The typical age of onset is in the late 40s to early 60s although it can present in women in their 30s all the way to their 80s. Prolapse can affect women of all races but Caucasian women appear to be affected more than others. This condition often runs in families and it's not uncommon for another woman in a patient's family to be affected. It's associated with vaginal deliveries.

Some patients don't have symptoms while others experience pressure or discomfort in the pelvis. Sometimes patients will have trouble emptying the bowels or bladder or suffer from urine or bowel leakage.

Prolapse is usually a quality of life problem, as it's rarely dangerous to one's health. The management of this condition is based on how to make one's life better, a decision that is primarily determined by the patient with counseling from her health care provider. It's important for women to understand that there are many options for the management of prolapse. Many patients find it easier to envision this problem as a hernia through the vagina. Just like a hernia, patients may choose to have no treatment, try several nonsurgical treatments or pursue one of several minimally invasive surgical repairs. We recommend that patients with signs of prolapse see an expert who can explain all of her care options.

**Urogynecologists at UMass Memorial Medical Center are fellowship trained in the treatment of pelvic floor disorders. Call for an appointment: 508-334-9840 (Worcester) or 508-870-7281 (Westborough).**