



Can my bladder drop?

By Dr. Ryan Stratford

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Yes, but "bladder drop" is somewhat of a misnomer. The bladder does not drop but the wall of the vagina does with the bladder behind it, called prolapse. This is not dangerous and will not lead to cancer, but similar to a hernia anywhere else in the body, can worsen over time. Heavy lifting and straining along with obesity contribute to the problem. Over time, the bladder can push into the vagina until the vagina is inside out – outside the body. Typically, if prolapse is that severe, the bowel and rectum are also involved.

Prolapse of the bladder can cause irritation to the bladder and may result in increased urge to urinate and possibly involuntary leakage. Most patients who believe their bladder has dropped are concerned most about their bladder function. Not only can prolapse contribute to urinary incontinence but also urinary retention. Prolapse may make it more difficult to empty the bladder and result in the need to change positions while urinating or even pushing the vaginal wall back up to allow complete emptying.

The treatment for prolapse entails either placing a device called a pessary to hold it up, much like a diaphragm, or having surgery. Surgical repair has changed markedly in the last decade and has become more durable and effective. Because the surgical repair is technically challenging, specialized surgeons trained in these techniques called urogynecologists may be preferred.

Ultimately, it is important to remember that prolapse is not dangerous. However, if you believe that your bladder has dropped or prolapsed, it is important to have a doctor evaluate the severity of the prolapse and determine if surgery is the best option. With treatment, you may find improved bladder function and a much healthier, happier lifestyle.