

# Rectocoele Repair

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## **What is a rectocoele repair?**

This is an operation in which the bulge between your rectum (bowel) and vagina is strengthened.

## **Which rectocoeles should be repaired?**

Rectocoeles are quite common, especially in women. The decision about whether to repair a rectocoele depends on its size and whether it is causing symptoms. Typical symptoms include the sensation of a bulge at the back of the vagina, a feeling that stools are going the wrong way (towards the vagina), the need to push on a pocket at the back of the vagina to empty the bowel fully and of leakage after opening the bowel.

## **Which operation should be performed for a rectocoele?**

The choice of operation depends on whether the rectocoele is the only problem or if there are other problems too. For example, if there is an intussusception, a rectopexy might be performed which will treat both this and the rectocoele. A rectocoele repair is performed when it is thought that the rectocoele is the only problem or when the rectocoele is the only remaining problem after other surgery. For example, sometimes a rectopexy corrects the intussusception but does not completely get rid of the rectocoele.

## **What other tests are necessary before the operation?**

Your surgeon will want to examine you in the clinic and get further tests including a proctogram. In part, the surgeon will want more information about the rectocoele but in addition will need to know if there are any other associated problems.

## **What does the operation involve?**

A rectocoele repair is performed under a general anaesthetic. All the surgery is done through the anus and therefore there are no stitches on the outside. The lining of the bowel is stripped off and the muscle wall plicated or buttressed to strengthen the wall between bowel and vagina.

## **What is the recovery like after surgery?**

You will usually be able to leave hospital either the same day or the following day after surgery. You might be discharged on a weaning course of laxatives (usually movicol). It is important you do not get constipated as this may damage the repair. Sometimes your surgeon will recommend that you take a course of antibiotics. You can shower and bath after the operation and this is helpful in keeping the area as clean as possible. You may be fit to drive after 1-2 weeks, return to work after 2-4 weeks but should not do any lifting for at least 6 weeks.

## **What are the results like from surgery?**

It may take a little bit of time for your bowels to settle down into a pattern after surgery. You may experience some bleeding and discharge. Around three quarters of patients will find that their symptoms improve.

## **What are the risks of surgery?**

The main problem with this operation is that wound infection is very common because of where the wound is situated. This usually causes some discomfort and discharge. Your surgeon will discuss the risk so surgery with you prior to the procedure.

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