What is Vaginal Prolapse?

Vaginal prolapse is a common condition where the pelvic organs—such as the bladder, bowel, or uterus—bulge into the vagina due to weakened or damaged pelvic floor muscles and tissues. This happens when the support structures that hold these organs in place become stretched or torn.

Symptoms of Vaginal Prolapse

You may experience:

- A feeling of heaviness, pressure, or a bulging sensation in the vagina, particularly after standing for long periods.
- Difficulty emptying your bladder completely or frequent urinary tract infections.
- Constipation or a feeling of incomplete bowel emptying.
- Achy discomfort or pain in the pelvic region.
- Discomfort or pain during sexual intercourse.

What Causes Vaginal Prolapse?

Several factors can contribute to the weakening of pelvic floor muscles, including:

- **Pregnancy and childbirth**, particularly with large babies, multiple births, or instrumental deliveries (forceps or vacuum).
- **Heavy lifting** over time, whether from work, exercise, or carrying heavy loads.
- **Chronic coughing** due to smoking, asthma, or lung disease.
- **Constipation** and excessive straining during bowel movements.
- **Obesity**, which increases pressure on the pelvic floor.
- **Menopause**, due to decreased estrogen levels affecting tissue strength.
- **Genetic predisposition**, as some women naturally have weaker connective tissue.

How is Vaginal Prolapse Diagnosed?

A doctor will assess your symptoms and perform a pelvic examination using a speculum to check for signs of prolapse. You may be asked to cough or bear down (similar to having a bowel movement) to see how the pelvic organs respond.

Treatment Options for Vaginal Prolapse

Treatment depends on the severity of the prolapse and your symptoms. The main options include:

Lifestyle Changes

- **Weight management**: Losing excess weight can reduce pressure on the pelvic floor.
- **Smoking cessation**: Quitting smoking helps prevent chronic coughing that can worsen prolapse.
- **Managing chronic conditions**: Treating a persistent cough, constipation, or other contributing health issues can reduce symptoms.

- **Avoiding heavy lifting**: If unavoidable, practice proper lifting techniques to reduce strain on the pelvic floor.

Pelvic Floor Exercises (Kegels)

Strengthening the pelvic floor muscles through regular exercises can help improve symptoms and prevent worsening of prolapse. A physiotherapist or healthcare provider can guide you on proper techniques.

Vaginal Pessaries

A vaginal pessary is a small, supportive device made of silicone or plastic that is inserted into the vagina to provide support to the pelvic organs. This is a non-surgical option that can be fitted in a healthcare provider's office and may help relieve symptoms.

Surgical Treatment

If symptoms are severe or other treatments are not effective, surgery may be considered. Options include:

- **Repairing the weakened or torn pelvic floor tissue** to restore support.
- **Hysterectomy** (removal of the uterus) if uterine prolapse is significant.
- **Mesh or graft repairs** (in selected cases) to reinforce support.

When to See a Doctor

If you experience persistent symptoms that affect your daily activities or quality of life, speak with your healthcare provider. Early management can help prevent worsening of symptoms and improve comfort.