



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# About Your Enterocele or Rectocele Repair

This information describes enteroceles and rectoceles and how they are repaired.

## About Enteroceles

An enterocele (en-tuh-roh-seal), also called small bowel prolapse, occurs when the small intestine moves down and pushes at the top part of the vagina. This creates a bulge (see Figure 1).

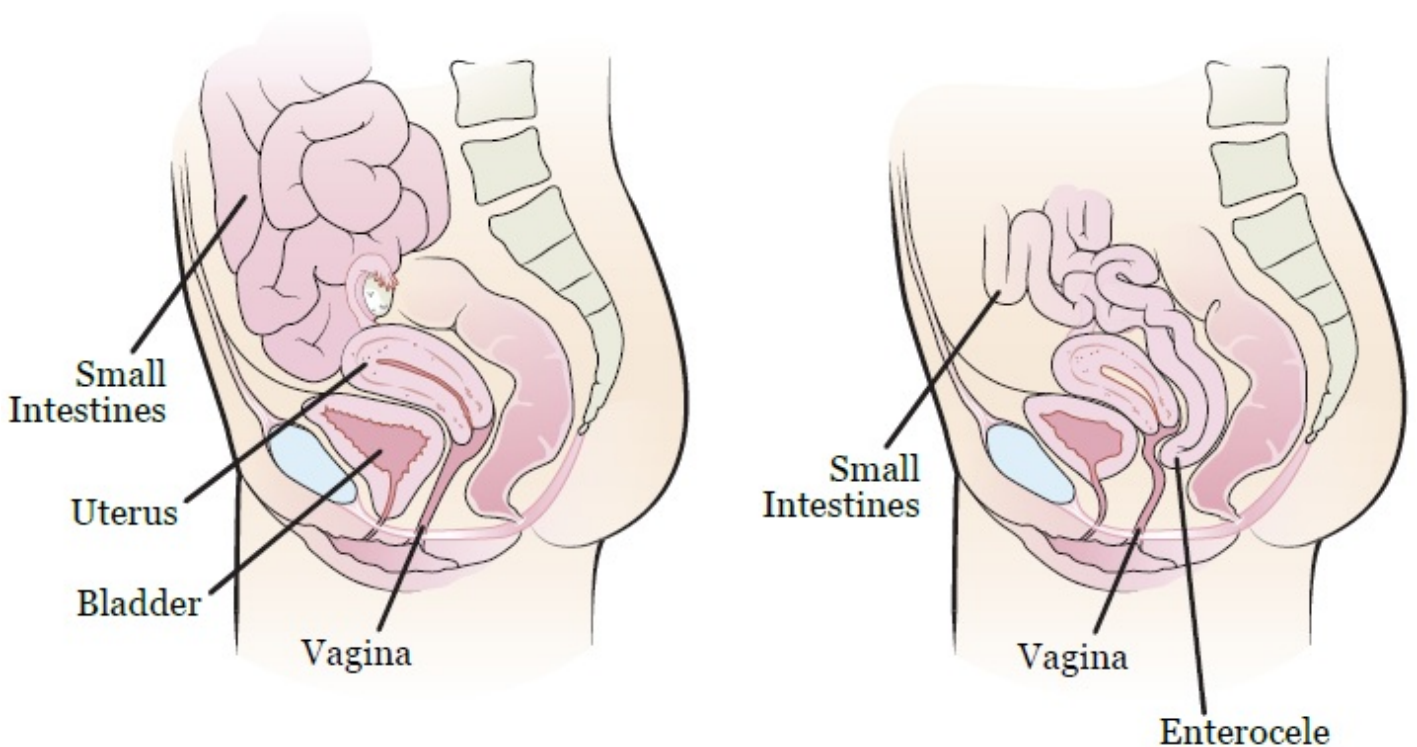


Figure 1. Female anatomy with and without an enterocele

An enterocele happens when the roof of your vagina weakens. This can be caused by:

- Aging
- Vaginal deliveries of heavy babies
- Menopause
- A hysterectomy (surgery to remove your uterus) or other gynecologic surgery

## About Rectoceles

A rectocele (rek-tuh-seal), also called a posterior prolapse, is when your rectum bulges into the back wall of your vagina (see Figure 2).

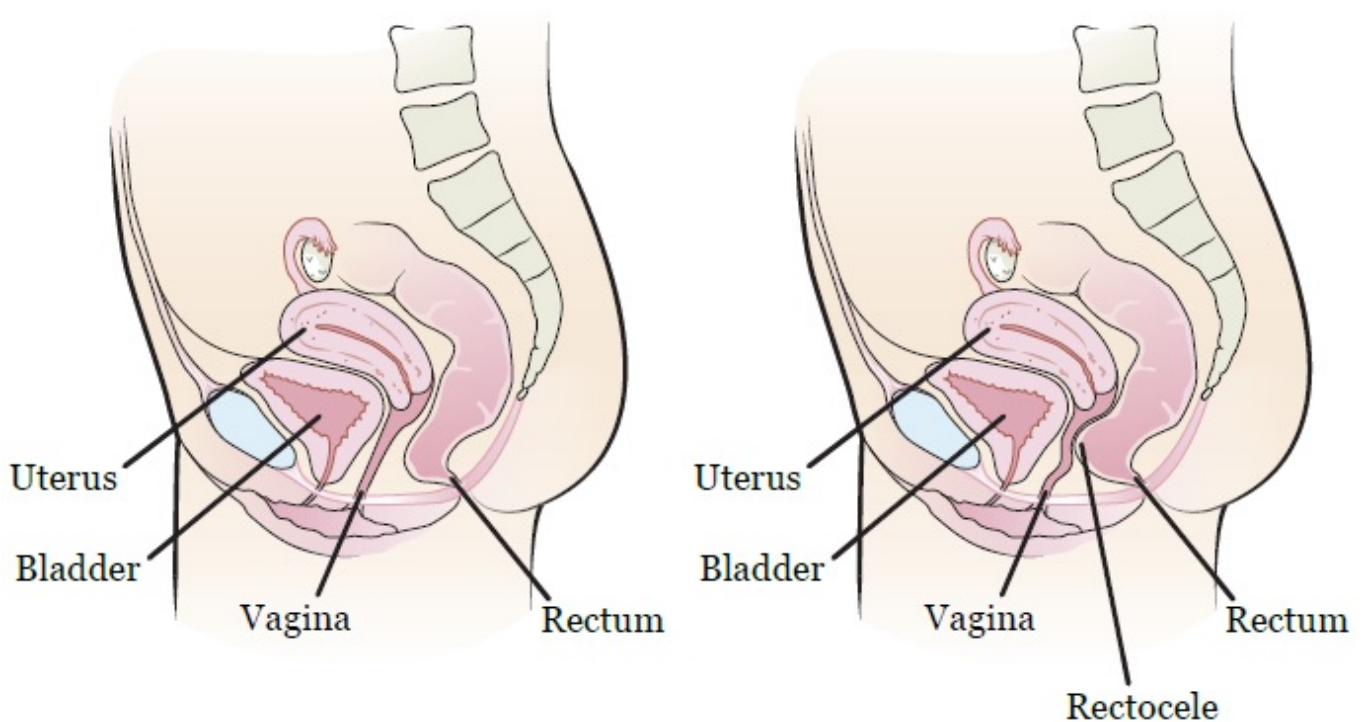


Figure 2. Female anatomy with and without a rectocele

A rectocele happens when the muscles in your vaginal wall weaken. This can be caused by:

- Aging
- Vaginal deliveries of heavy babies

- Menopause

## **Treatment for Enteroceles or Rectoceles**

You will have a repair surgery. A repair surgery will strengthen the wall of your vagina with sutures (stitches). An enterocele repair stops the small intestine from bulging into your vagina. A rectocele repair stops the rectum from bulging into the vagina.

### **Risks of having repair surgery**

Most people who have enterocele or rectocele repair surgery don't have problems after their surgery. After your surgery, you may experience:

- Pain
- Vaginal bleeding
- Infection
- Injury to the bladder or ureters (tubes that take urine from the kidneys to the bladder)
- Incontinence (urinary leakage)
- Long-term or permanent problems urinating
  - You may have to insert a catheter (thin, flexible tube) into your bladder to drain your urine. You may also need another surgery to correct the problem.
- Trouble holding in your urine until you reach a toilet
- Narrowing of your vagina
- Pain or discomfort during sexual intercourse (sex)

## What to Expect During Repair Surgery

- Your surgery will take 1 to 2 hours.
- You will receive anesthesia (medication to make you sleepy) during your surgery.
- Your surgeon will put absorbable sutures into the wall of your vagina. Your small intestine and rectum aren't involved in the surgery.
- Most people go home the day after their surgery.

## What to Expect After Repair Surgery

- You will have a gauze dressing in your vagina to help stop bleeding. The dressing will be removed the day after your surgery.
- A catheter will drain urine from your bladder. Your nurse will remove it the day after your surgery.
- You may have some vaginal bleeding after surgery. Wear a pad or panty liner. Don't use tampons.
- You can shower 48 hours after your surgery. Don't take tub baths, go swimming, or sit in a hot tub until your doctor or nurse says it's safe.

### Take your medications

You will have to take 3 medications after your surgery:

- An antibiotic that you must take until all the pills are gone
- Medication to relieve pain after surgery
- A stool softener to keep your bowels loose. You can stop taking

it if you have diarrhea (loose or watery bowel movements)

## **Follow-up**

- Make an appointment to see your doctor 2 weeks after your surgery.
- Don't lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 3 months after your surgery.
- Avoid strenuous exercise, such as running or jogging, for 3 months after surgery.
- Don't have sexual intercourse or put anything in your vagina (such as tampons) for 6 weeks after your surgery.

## **Call Your Doctor or Nurse if You Have:**

- A temperature of 101° F (38.3° C) or higher
- More vaginal bleeding than when you were in the hospital
- Pain that doesn't go away with pain medication
- Severe bladder spasms
- Not had a bowel movement for more than 48 hours
- Not passed gas for 24 hours
- Nausea, vomiting, or both

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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