

Female urethral sling operation



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Information for patients

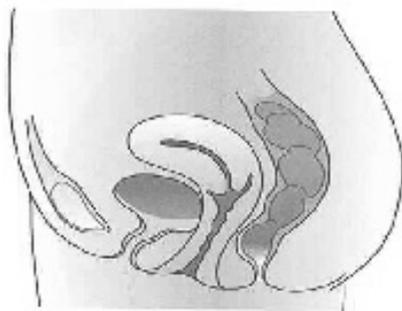
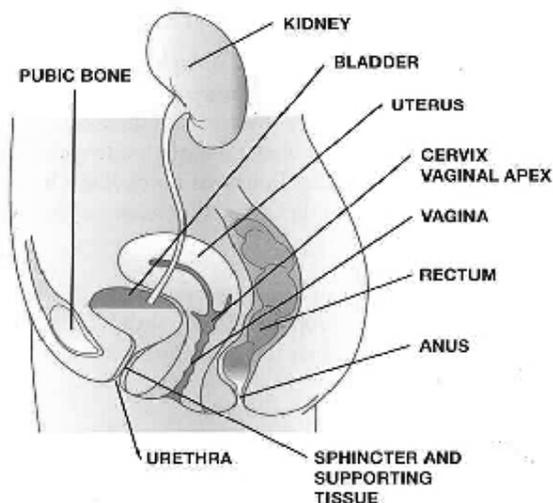
This booklet is a guide only. Treatment may vary according to individual patient needs.

What is a mid-urethral sling?

There are different surgical options for women with urinary stress incontinence who have not responded to physiotherapy or medication.

The aim of this operation is to provide support to the urethra so that women with stress incontinence are dry or have significant improvement at follow-up.

This operation can be performed alone or in combination with vaginal repair or hysterectomy.



Body before incontinence

Body with incontinence

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What happens before my operation?

Before your operation, urodynamics testing is done to confirm the diagnosis and rule out any other cause for your incontinence.

You will attend a pre-admission clinic before surgery. At the clinic, the healthcare team will ask you about your health and lifestyle. They may test your blood, urine and/or take x-rays.

The staff will advise you on what you will need to bring into hospital.

The doctor, when preparing your admission, will tell you about what medications to take or stop taking before you come into hospital.

If you do not need to be seen we will contact you by phone and tell you when your operation is scheduled and what to bring to hospital.

On the working day before your operation we will phone to tell you when to arrive at the hospital and when to begin fasting.

What will happen on the operation day?

On the day of your operation, please come to the St Vincent's Day Procedure Unit, located on the first floor of the Inpatient Services Building, Princes Street in Fitzroy.

Your anaesthetist will meet with you before the operation and decide if your operation will be performed under general or spinal anaesthetic.

St Vincent's is a busy hospital, so you might need to wait up to three hours until your operation.

We ask you to shower before coming to hospital and to remove any jewellery, as this can interfere with some medical procedures and equipment.

It is best for you to leave valuables such as money or jewellery at home.

What happens during the surgery?

You will have a small incision (1-2cm) in your vagina and two (1cm) on your lower abdomen or inner thigh.

A special tape is looped under your urethra to provide lift and support.

At the end of the operation the surgeon looks inside your bladder with a medical telescope to check the bladder (cystoscopy).

The operation usually takes about 1 hour.

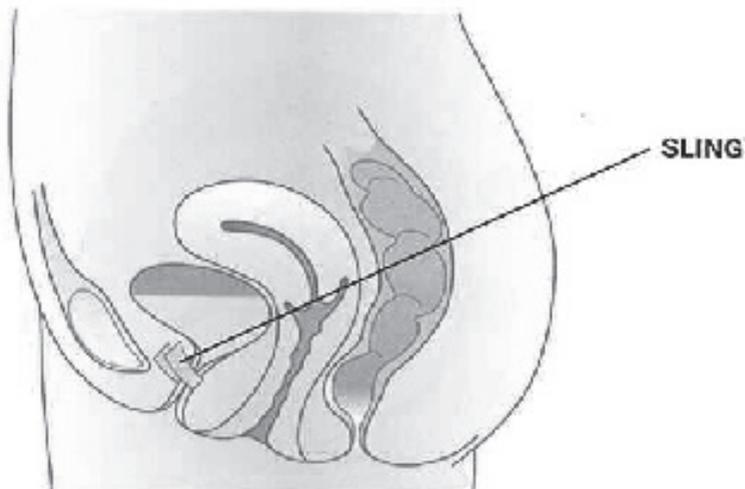


Diagram courtesy AMS Solutions for Life

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What happens after the operation?

You will wake up in the recovery room and be transferred to your ward shortly afterwards. A nurse will monitor your blood pressure, pulse and temperature.

You will be given a dose of intravenous antibiotics as a precautionary measure.

Some women have a vaginal pack; if you do this will be removed the day after your operation.

If you are in discomfort after the operation you will be given medication to make you more comfortable. It's not uncommon to have some pain after the surgery for 2 to 4 weeks.

You may eat and drink on return to the ward. How soon will depend on the anaesthetic you were given.

Are there any complications?

There can be complications with any type of surgery, but serious complications are rare with this operation. Complications can include:

- A small risk of the surgical instruments entering the bladder, urethra or blood vessels
- Some women experiencing vaginal bleeding
- A small percentage of women experiencing trouble going to the toilet – you may need a urinary catheter back in for a day or two after your operation
- Some patients needing a surgical review after the operation
- A percentage of women developing an irritable bladder – that is, the sudden and strong urgency to pass urine even when bladder is not full; some patients may also have occasional leakage and pain, which improves over the next 1 to 3 months.

Discuss any of these symptoms with your doctor when you have your post-operative check up.

When can I go home?

Most women return home after 2 to 4 days, once you are feeling well and are passing urine without problems.

Discharge time is 10am.

Before you leave the ward

Prior to leaving the ward someone will:

- Make a follow-up appointment at St Vincent's Clinics for you
- Prepare a letter providing information about your operation to your local doctor/GP
- Go over discharge advice as listed below
- Discuss who to contact if you have any other questions or concerns.

The pharmacist will give you the medication the doctor has prescribed. This may include a stool softener, pain relief and/or antibiotics.

What should I do once I get home?

Recovery takes 6 weeks. To allow your body to heal it is important to rest after the operation. This means restricting activity for first 2 weeks. Gentle walking is encouraged.

After 2 weeks you can do light activity only. Things to consider are:

- No lifting anything heavier than 4-6 kilos, e.g. shopping bags, washing baskets and children
- No heavy housework such as vacuuming
- Ideally limit any lifting to below 10kg for 3 months
- No sexual activity for 6 weeks
- No exercise or sport for 6 weeks – no bending, squatting, climbing, stepping up into high vehicles or extreme leg spreads, no bike riding or jogging
- No baths or hot tubs for 4 weeks
- No swimming (you can shower 24 hours after your operation)
- No driving for 2-4 weeks as per the doctor's instructions

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- Keep your bowels regular by eating a high-fibre diet and drinking at least 1½ litres of fluids; this prevents you from having to strain when going to the toilet, which can affect the healing process.
- Check your wounds for redness, swelling or discharge.

It is important to contact the Urology Department or your GP if:

- You have heavy vaginal bleeding
- You have any blood in your urine
- The wounds become red or start to ooze
- You have any fever, chills or shivering
- You are unable to pass urine
- The pain is not controlled by tablets or your pain continues – please let your doctor know.

Contact

Urology Department
St Vincent's
PO Box 2900
Fitzroy VIC 3065
Tel: (03) 9288 2211



St Vincent's

*Continuing the Mission of
the Sisters of Charity*

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Mission

Our health service is based on and driven by our quest for:
Compassion – Justice – Human Dignity – Excellence – Unity