

What should I do if I think pelvic mesh is affecting my health?

If you are having symptoms visit your GP to determine if your symptoms may be associated with the mesh implant. If your GP does not have details of your operation, you or your GP may ask for a copy from the hospital via Freedom of Information, to help establish a management plan for you.

The SA Health pelvic mesh consumer support telephone service, 1800 66 MESH (1800 666 374), can provide more information regarding accessing your medical records.

What can be done about pelvic mesh that is causing symptoms?

A comprehensive assessment of your complications and possible treatment options specific to your circumstances will need to be undertaken. This will be undertaken by a specialist Urogynaecologist and other specialist health professionals such as a continence nurse, pelvic floor physiotherapist, pain management specialist etc. - those relevant to your concerns and clinical condition.

Can I get access to my medical records?

Patients who have had a pelvic mesh procedure may wish to access their medical record. The South Australian *Freedom of Information Act 1991* gives members of the public a legally enforceable right to access information subject to certain conditions.

For more information:

Pelvic Mesh Consumer Support Line
C/- Continence Nursing Services
Women's & Children's Division
Lyell McEwin Hospital

Telephone:
1800 66 MESH (1800 666 374)

Email:
Health.PelvicMeshSupportService@sa.gov.au

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SA Pelvic Mesh Consumer Support Line

1800 66 MESH (1800 666 374)

Free call
9am - 4pm,
Monday to Friday
(excluding public holidays)

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SA Health

Pelvic mesh is woven synthetic netting, usually made from Polypropylene that is implanted into the pelvis for a variety of conditions, including:

- > **Prolapse** - a condition where a woman's vaginal walls and pelvic organs (uterus, bladder and bowel) lose their natural support which causes them to bulge down within, and sometimes outside of, the vagina.
- > **Stress incontinence** - a condition where the supporting tissues of the bladder neck and urethra lose their natural support which causes an accidental loss of urine with physical activity such as coughing, sneezing or exercise.

These two conditions are different but both may occur in the same woman, and the surgeries for the two conditions may be performed together.

The mesh used in each condition is made from the same material, but the nature of the operation for each condition can be quite different.

Many women choose to have pelvic mesh surgery because they have not gained sufficient improvement with non-surgical treatments, and the condition is affecting their quality of life.

What is the concern with pelvic mesh?

Pelvic mesh has been used in the treatment since the '90s and the majority of women who have had surgical treatment continue to have a good long-term outcome, however some women have experienced complications.

Some of these are very serious and life-changing, particularly for women who experience severe chronic pain, have had mesh exposure or erosion into the bladder, urethra or bowel, or recurrent vaginal exposure and infection.

As a result of concerns expressed, a national inquiry was undertaken to help address the issues raised in the independent reviews.

Further to this, in December 2017, the Therapeutic Goods Administration, Australia's regulatory authority for therapeutic goods, removed transvaginal mesh solely used for the treatment of most pelvic organ prolapse (such as bladder, bowel or uterine prolapse).

What symptoms might I notice if I have a pelvic mesh complication?

There are a wide range of symptoms that may be associated with pelvic mesh implant complications, including:

- > Pain that is not improving - low abdominal, pelvic, groin, thigh or buttock pain
- > Poking / prickling sensation or spasms in the pelvic area
- > You or your sexual partner feeling the mesh through the vaginal wall
- > Pain (either you or your sexual partner) during sexual intercourse

- > Abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge
- > Difficulty with bladder emptying
- > Pain associated with urination
- > Recurrent bladder infections
- > Abscess or swelling at the mesh insertion or exit sites, vaginal ulceration or pelvic pain.

What is being done about this in South Australia?

- > SA Health has established a governance framework to develop support for women. Lead clinicians from across South Australia, along with consumer advisors, are working together to develop the best strategies to support 'mesh affected' women in South Australia.
- > SA Health is developing clinical referral pathways and dedicated pelvic mesh clinics for women affected by pelvic mesh implants, with support provided from a multidisciplinary team; including a pain specialist, clinical psychologist, pelvic floor physiotherapist specialist, urogynaecology specialist nurse, social worker and ultrasound specialist.
- > SA Health has also established a support telephone line for women concerned about pelvic mesh.

1800 66 MESH (1800 666 374)