

Use of Mesh in Surgery for Urinary Incontinence and Prolapse

The use of mesh in surgery for urine leakage or prolapse of pelvic organs (bladder, uterus, vaginal walls, bowels) can be a complicated and controversial topic. For this reason, the Urogynecologists at Michigan Medicine have put together a list of things you should know. Most importantly, please be sure you ask all of your questions and understand what your surgery involves.

- Mesh for treatment of stress urinary incontinence or abdominal or laparoscopic/robotic repair of prolapse (called “abdominal sacrocolpopexy”) is **not the same** as the “pelvic mesh kits” or “vaginal mesh” currently under FDA review.
- The primary problems after use of mesh in surgeries for urine leakage or prolapse are:
 - Exposure of the mesh in the vagina later (sometimes called “extrusion” or “erosion”). The risk of mesh erosion with a sling surgery for urinary incontinence is about 2 in 100 (2%) and the risk of erosion with an abdominal sacrocolpopexy for pelvic organ prolapse is about 3 in 100 (3%).
 - Bleeding
 - Infection
 - Scarring
 - Pain. This can include pain with sexual intercourse.
 - These problems can require complex further surgery. Complete removal of mesh can be difficult.
- Mesh material is **permanent** and will be in your body for the rest of your life. It will never completely dissolve.
- Mesh should not be used in every incontinence or prolapse surgery, but can safely be placed by experienced surgeons in some situations. There is always some risk with any surgery.
- There are alternative surgeries that involve no mesh, although sometimes these have a higher risk of the prolapse or leakage coming back.
- The doctors here at Michigan Medicine have each completed a residency plus specialized training to have the necessary experience and expertise to

perform your surgery. Many patients with mesh-related complications are referred here from across the entire state. We have studied and published our experience with mesh complications in medical journals.

- After surgery, if you have problems or concerns about anything you're experiencing, please call us. Open communication helps make your health care better.
- Please inform any doctors you see in the future that you've had surgery involving a mesh implant.

Where can I find more information?

For more information, you can go to:

- U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) information for patients, *Urogynecologic Surgical Mesh Implants*:
www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/ProductsandMedicalProcedures/ImplantsandProsthetics/UroGynSurgicalMesh/.
- American Urogynecologic Society information for patients,
 - *Stress Urinary Incontinence*: <https://www.augs.org/assets/2/6/SUI.pdf>
 - *Pelvic Organ Prolapse*: <https://www.augs.org/assets/2/6/POP.pdf>

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