



## PERINEAL MASSAGE IN PREGNANCY

### What Is My “Perineum”?

Your perineum is the area between your vaginal opening and your rectum. This area stretches a lot during childbirth, and sometimes it tears. If your health care provider performs an episiotomy during birth, it is this area that is cut. You may need stitches after your baby is born if you have a tear or have had an episiotomy.

### I’m Concerned About Perineal Tears—How Often Do They Occur?

40% to 85% of all women who give birth vaginally will tear. About two thirds of these women will need stitches.

### Can My Health Care Provider Do Anything to Help Me Avoid a Tear?

There are many ways that your health care provider can help to reduce your chances of tearing. For example, your provider may recommend specific pushing positions and provide gentle pressure on the baby’s head as it comes out.

### Can I Do Anything Before The Birth To Help Me Avoid a Tear?

Reducing tearing has been the subject of many research studies. Several studies have found that perineal massage during the last weeks of pregnancy can reduce tearing at birth particularly in first time mothers. However a recent study by Mei-dan et al (2008) found that the practice of antenatal perineal massage showed neither a protective nor a detrimental significant effect on the occurrence of perineal trauma.

### Are There Any Risks to Perineal Massage During Pregnancy?

Not that we know of. It is free. It doesn’t hurt. It is easy to do. And most women don’t mind doing it. However, you should check with your health care provider before beginning perineal massage. And, if you believe your bag of waters is leaking, check with your health care provider before putting anything in your vagina.

### What is the Local Policy?

In the Midwifery Led Unit, information and instruction leaflets are available on perineal massage. Women are supported in their decision to perform or refuse antenatal perineal massage.

### Further Information

If you wish to discuss this in more depth, your midwife will be happy to discuss it with you.

