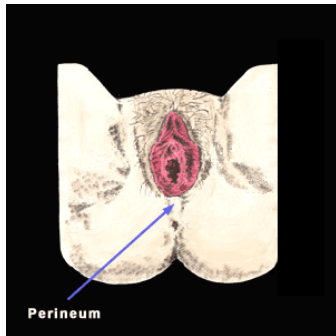


Can perineal massage help to prevent a tear or an episiotomy?

There is not currently any evidence that massage will help to prevent a tear or the need for an episiotomy.

However, there is also no indication that it does not help. Although it may not prevent a tear, it will help to improve the stretchiness and it will desensitize you to the pressure of stretching.



Warning Signs in Late Pregnancy

Call your doctor or caregiver if you see any of these signs.

Bleeding (especially bright red blood from your vagina) at any time

Headaches

Blurred vision

Swelling of arms, hands, or face

Pain right under your ribcage

Sudden, unexplained weight gain.

Decreased foetal movements

Signs of Labour before 37 weeks.

Contractions of your uterus (four or more in an hour)

Menstrual-like **cramps**

Dull ache in your lower back

Pressure in your pelvis, groin, or thighs

Increase / change in **vaginal discharge**, especially a **gush of fluid**



PERINEAL MASSAGE & LATE PREGNANCY WARNING SIGNS

Ripple Effect Yoga

Perineal massage

The perineum involves the skin & muscles between the vagina & the anus. After your baby's head 'crowns' the perineum naturally relaxes, stretches & expands to allow the head to be born.

It is amazing how these tissues can stretch with regular massage. The more that you are able to pre-stretch them before the birth the better you will return to your original shape after it.

Start around 36 weeks and practise once a day.

Use a light touch to explore the layers of tissues along the back wall of the vagina and anus. It is this area that is most stretched during the birth of your baby and is most prone to tearing.

Where, when & how?

Pick a time of day when you are relaxed & free from interruptions.

Insert two fingers into the vagina up to the first knuckle, progressing to the second knuckle with practise. Press against the back wall of the vagina, against the spine, while breathing deeply. Feel the muscles under your fingers as they engage on the out breath. As space is created, move in further and exert a little more pressure.

Using your breath in this way is like blowing up a balloon. Nothing much seems to happen at first, but soon your perineal tissue starts to give and then begins to stretch.

You will be amazed at how much you can stretch it, simply by breathing out into the areas under your fingers.

Benefits of this massage

These include

- * stretching & increasing the elasticity of the perineum and vaginal opening
- * as well as teaching you to actively relax your perineum while there is a sensation of pressure on it, as there will be when the baby's head begins to crown during birth.