

Perineal scar massage after a tear or cut in childbirth

Maternity Services

Information for Patients

Produced: May 2025

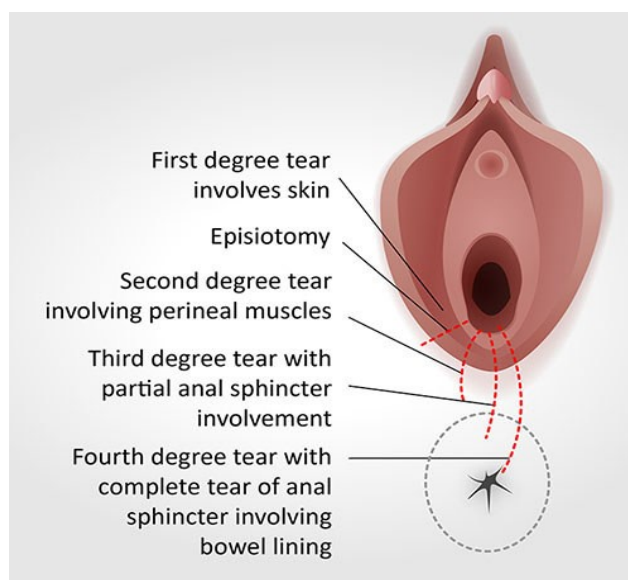
Review: May 2028

Leaflet number: 1611 Version: 1

Introduction

You have had a tear or a cut whilst giving birth. There are 4 levels of tear:

1. A first degree tear happens to just the skin or top layer of the vagina.
2. A second degree tear happens to the skin and muscles around the vagina.
3. A third degree tear goes deeper into the muscles around your back passage.
4. A fourth degree tear is the deepest tear going into the lining of your back passage.



Courtesy of RCOG

This leaflet tells you how massage can improve comfort and healing after a tear or cut in vaginal childbirth.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Healing and scarring after a tear

For most women tears are minor and heal quickly. How well your wound heals and how much scar tissue develops changes from person to person.

You could have a cut (episiotomy) or tear in the space between the vagina and anus (perineum) during childbirth. When this happens your body rapidly makes a protein called collagen. Collagen builds up where the tissue is injured. It helps to heal and strengthen the wound. These collagen fibres overlap and create scar tissue.

This scar can be firm, raised, uneven and sore. The scar can get thick over time as new collagen builds up. The scar will be less flexible and less stretchy than the tissues around it. This scar tissue can make the area feel tight, sensitive or painful. You might feel this gives you some discomfort during sexual intercourse or daily activities.

Scar massage is a way of helping the scar tissue feel less uncomfortable. This will make sexual intercourse and normal activities like walking, exercise and sitting more comfortable.

How does perineal scar massage work?

Massaging softens and flattens the scar and makes it more flexible. It can help soothe any itching and sensitivity of the scar.

Massaging helps the blood flow to the area. This increases the temperature in the scar tissue. The warmth helps the scar tissue to break down and improve elasticity.

What are the benefits of perineal scar massage?

It can:

- reduce pain, discomfort and itchiness in the scar area
- make the scar more flexible
- soften and flatten the scar to improve how it looks
- help your perineum to stretch well in future vaginal births

When is it safe to start perineal scar massage?

You must wait for your wound and stitches to heal completely before starting. Do not begin perineal scar massage if the wound is still open or infected. If you do not know if it is safe to begin the massage ask your GP to check the wound.

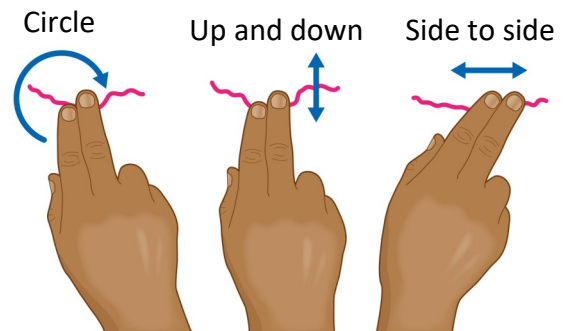
General advice for perineal scar massage

- Try applying a warm compress or taking a warm bath before massaging. This can help blood flow to the area and help relax the muscles.
- Get into a comfortable half sitting or lying position.
- Use a natural lubricant or oil like almond oil, olive oil, or coconut oil. Do not use any oil or lubricant that you are allergic to.
- Practise deep breathing before massaging as it can help relax the muscles.
- The massage should not be painful. But it can feel uncomfortable when you first start.
- You can gently massage the scar tissue for 5 to 10 minutes. You can do it for a shorter time if the area is still very sensitive. Do this every day or every other day following like the instructions below.

How to do perineal scar massage

Massaging on top of the scar outside the vagina:

1. Start by massaging on top of the scar.
2. Use your fingertips. You can use your thumb or fingers.
3. Gently put pressure and massage in a **circle** motion over the scar.
4. Then move across the scar using **up and down** motions.
5. Then move on the scar line using **side to side** movements. Use the picture to help you.
6. You should work over all parts of the scar and towards the anus.
7. If you feel that a certain direction or spot feels more tight, hold a gentle stretch in that direction until you feel the tension or discomfort begin to ease. You can do this for up to 90 seconds.



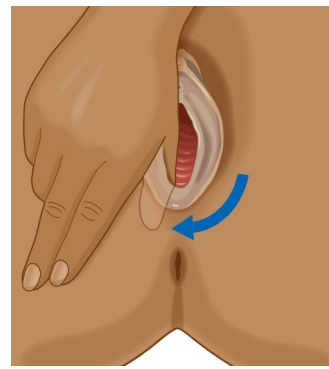
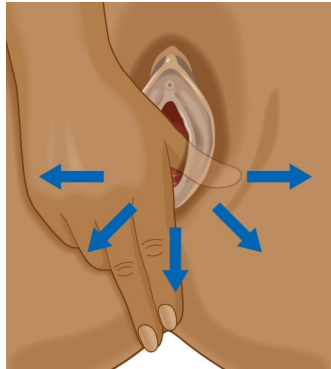
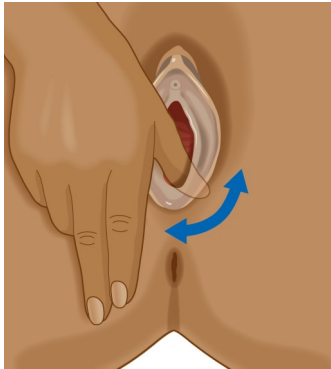
Massaging the scar line inside your vagina :

When you feel comfortable you can begin massaging the scar line inside your vagina.

1. Put your thumb into the vaginal entrance up to the first knuckle. The pad of your fingertip should be facing down toward the anus.
2. Sweep across in a U shape along the bottom of the vaginal opening.
3. If you feel that a certain spot feels more tight, hold the stretch there for 90 seconds. See if the tightness eases. If it feels too sore, start with a gentle touch and avoid applying pressure to begin with.

Scar rolling:

1. Put your thumb inside the vaginal opening.
2. Place your index finger on the perineum so you can feel the scar tissue beneath it.
3. Massage in a circular movement, as if rolling a ball between your thumb and forefinger.
4. Continue this motion for 2 to 3 minutes or as long as comfortable.



Tips:

- If touching the area is too painful or sensitive at the start, you can touch the area softly with your fingers. You can also move or pour water gently over the area. You can also touch the area with soft textures like tissues.
- A small vibrator can also be used to help make the scar less sensitive and improve circulation.

What should I do if I have problems with my cut or tear?

If you notice any of the following issues:

- Increasing pain in your perineum
- If you think your stitches have come apart
- Stitches becoming painful or having an unpleasant odour
- Uncontrollable leakage of poo or wind
- Signs of fever or high temperature
- Any other concerns or worries

You should contact Maternity Assessment Unit, your midwife, or your GP for advice and support.

Quick links to information and support

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists: Tears Hub

www.rcog.org.uk/for-the-public/perineal-tears-and-episiotomies-in-childbirth/



Pelvic Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy: Patient Information

www.thepogp.co.uk/resources/booklets/



MASIC: Information and support for women who have suffered an obstetric anal sphincter injury

www.masic.org.uk



Birth Trauma Association: Supporting parents who have experienced birth trauma

www.birthtraumaassociation.org



For urgent advice please contact the Maternity Assessment Unit at Leicester Royal Infirmary or Leicester General Hospital on: **0116 258 6111**

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