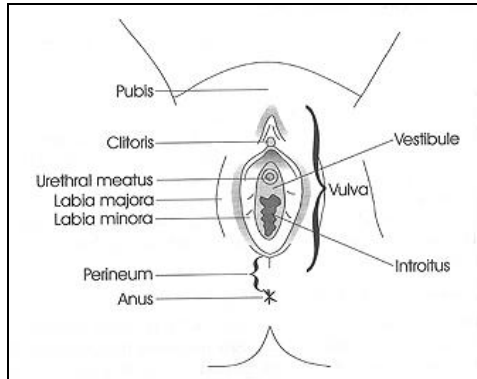


What is a perineal wound?

The perineum is the area of skin and muscle between the vaginal opening and the anus (back passage).



Complications with the perineum during delivery:

Perineal Tear

During birth the perineum stretches and this makes the tissue thinner which can sometimes cause this to tear. The extent of damage of the tear can vary. This will determine the management of the tear; it may or may not be sutured (stitched). Speak to your midwife for more information regarding your type of tear.

Episiotomy

An episiotomy is a cut in the perineum made by your midwife or doctor at the time your baby is being born. This helps the vaginal opening to become wider, allowing more

space for your baby. An episiotomy is only made with your consent, and when the midwife or doctor feels it would be helpful. A local anaesthetic is always used prior to the episiotomy and also during the suturing. The cut will be sutured. The stitches usually dissolve within 10 – 15 days.

Complications with your perineal wound:

Most perineal wounds heal well. However it is important to be aware of possible complications and the signs and symptoms of these in order to highlight them to your midwife as soon as possible.

Haematoma

A haematoma is a blood clot which can form underneath the wound. This can impede the healing of the wound so is important that it is identified early. These symptoms are usually more apparent in the early stages.

Signs & symptoms of haematoma:

- Intense pain
- Unable to sit directly onto wound
- Feeling like you are sat on a ball
- Difficulty walking

Wound Infection

Perineal wounds are at high risk of infection due to their location. An infection usually becomes obvious at around 3 - 5 days.

Signs & symptoms of infection:

- Feeling systemically unwell (flu-like/feverish)
- Increasing pain
- Offensive odour
- Yellow discharge/pus will be coming from the wound itself
- Difficulty walking

If you have any of these signs or symptoms please speak to your midwife or GP as soon as possible. The wound will need to be reviewed and you may need antibiotics.

If your wound does open **do not panic** – the wound rarely needs to be re-sutured and it usually heals well.

TOP TIPS

Follow these handy hints to help you reduce the risk of these problems.

Hygiene:

1. Keep the wound as clean as possible by showering regularly. Always keep the head of the showerhead facing downwards
2. **DO NOT** use any soap or products
3. You can bath but do not stay in the bath for longer than 10minutes as the edges of the wound may soften.

4. Regularly use a cup or jug of water to wash the perineal area thoroughly especially after using the toilet
5. Regular periods resting without your pad or underwear on will allow air to the wound to help it stay dry
6. Use maternity pads as these are better for wound healing
7. Change your pad every 2 hours, even if you feel it doesn't need replacing. Wash your hands before and after doing this

Positioning:

8. Do not sit directly onto the wound for long periods as this will restrict the blood flow. Change your position regularly.
9. When you are sitting on the wound do your **pelvic floor exercises** to encourage the blood flow to the wound area (see Fit For Future booklet for technique or speak to your midwife/physiotherapist)
10. Avoid sitting on any type of ring. You can try to sit on two small cushions, one either side of your buttocks so your wound sits in between the cushions to reduce the pain

Toileting:

11. Stinging when passing urine is common with a perineal wound but this can be reduced by flushing water through as you pass urine
12. Avoid constipation - we do not want you to strain. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables and drink plenty of water
13. When sitting on the toilet keep your knees higher than your hips by placing your feet onto a stool and lean forward so your elbows rest onto your knees
14. Support your perineal wound when on the toilet by using a pad of paper or a warm wet flannel as you open your bowels

Nutrition

15. Poor nutrition has been linked to delayed wound healing so make sure you are eating a varied and balance diet.
16. Fish, poultry, meat, dairy products, fruit, dried fruit, dark green vegetables, will provide essential vitamins and minerals
17. Stay hydrated, this will also assist in your wound healing

Speak to your Midwife, Physiotherapist or GP if you have any concerns.

PERINEAL WOUND CARE

Useful Telephone Numbers:

Midwifery Led Unit – 02920745196

Physiotherapy Department – 0292074

Carole Broad Extension -2481

Treatment room - 4728

GP Tel:.....

Community Midwife:.....