NHS
Airedale
NHS Foundation Trust

Antenatal Perineal Massage

Information for patients,

Location B17/18 Maternity Services

YOUR HOSPITAL *Here to care*

Introduction

Research has shown that massaging your perineum (the area between your vagina and back passage) from approximately 34 weeks pregnant can reduce the chance of you sustaining a tear that requires stitches. It can also reduce the need for an episiotomy (a small cut into the perineum). Perineal massage is thought to be particularly beneficial if you are having your first baby. Research also shows that antenatal perineal massage can reduce discomfort after the birth for women who are having their second or subsequent babies.

The aim of this leaflet is to give you more information about how to perform antenatal perineal massage.

What is the perineum?

The perineum is the area of tissue between your vagina and your anus (back passage). It connects with your pelvic floor muscles. The pelvic floor muscles support your pelvic organs such as your bladder and bowel. During birth, the perineum stretches to make room for the baby. Most women (approximately 85%) will sustain a small tear as the baby is born.

What are the benefits of perineal massage?

Perineal massage in pregnancy can help to soften and increase the elasticity of the perineal tissue. This can in turn lead to a reduction in perineal tears that require stitching, as well as a reduction in the need for an episiotomy (a small cut into the perineum). Your perineum is also less likely to be painful after the birth of your baby if this is your second, or subsequent child.

When can I start perineal massage and how often should I do it?

You can start to perform perineal massage from 34 weeks pregnant up until the birth of your baby. While advice on frequency varies, it is recommended that for maximum benefit you should massage daily or at least on alternate days. It is important not to perform perineal massage if you have genital herpes, genital warts, thrush or any other vaginal infections.

Preparation for perineal massage

Wash your hands and ensure that your finger nails are trimmed to prevent scratching yourself

- Find a comfortable place to do perineal massage. You may wish to sit propped up with pillows for support, either on the sofa or your bed for example

- A good time to do perineal massage is after a warm bath as the blood vessels in the area are dilated and the perineum may feel softer and more comfortable to touch

- Use an unscented oil e.g. olive oil or sweet almond oil. Alternatively you can use a water based lubricant such as K-Y Jelly

- If you are doing the massage alone you may wish to use a mirror to help to see what you are doing. Alternatively, if you are both comfortable with the idea, you may wish to ask your partner to massage for you.

wikiHow to Do Perineal Massage

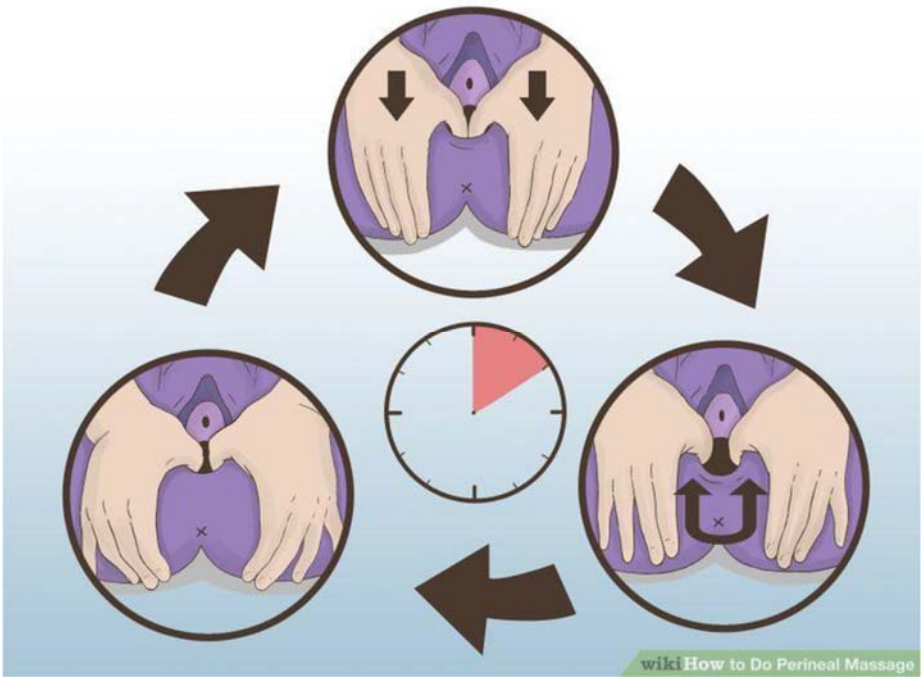
wikiHow to Do Perineal Massage

wikiHow to Do Perineal Massage

How to perform perineal massage

You may wish to perform perineal massage by yourself or with your partner's help. You may feel some stretching sensations during massage, but this should not be painful. Stop if you experience pain.

- Lubricate your thumbs or fingers with your chosen oil/lubricant and insert 2-3 centimetres inside the vagina
- Press your thumbs/fingers down towards the rectum (back passage) then move the thumbs or fingers in an upwards and outwards movement; in a rhythmic "U" shaped movement
- Try to relax the pelvic floor muscles as much as possible during the massage. This will allow the perineum to stretch more
- The massage can last as long as you wish but try and aim for around five to ten minutes each time.



If you have any questions about perineal massage please speak to your midwife. Whilst we know you may find this embarrassing, we won't, so please feel free to ask.

All images used in this leaflet are reproduced with the permission of wikiHow under the Creative Commons licence www.wikihow.com)

Useful contact numbers

Maternity Assessment Centre (01535) 292120 / 292410
Location: B8, Airedale General Hospital

Labour Ward (01535) 292402
Location: B17, Airedale General Hospital

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01535 294019

Author: Debi Gibson
Date of publication: Sept /2019 [version 1]
Date of review: Sept/2021

www.airedale-trust.nhs.uk