

Antenatal Perineal Massage

Research has shown that first-time mothers who do regular perineal massage have an increased likelihood of an intact perineum (no tears). It is recommended to do this massage for 5 to 10 minutes daily from 34 – 36 weeks.

Getting started

Wash your hands. Make yourself comfortable, in a semi-sitting position, squatting against a wall, standing with one foot up on the edge of a chair. Some women may find it comfortable to do this massage in the shower or bath.

Massage

Lubricate your fingers with massage oil. I recommend an unscented organic base oil, for example, sweet almond or sunflower oil. Rub enough oil into the perineum to allow your fingers to move smoothly over the tissue and lower vaginal wall. If you are doing the massage yourself, it is probably easiest to use your thumbs. Your partner can use his index fingers. Put the fingers or thumb well inside the vagina; move them upwards along the sides of the vagina in a rhythmic u or sling-type movement (as shown in the image below). This movement will stretch the vaginal tissue, the muscles surrounding the vagina and the skin of the perineum. You can also massage by rubbing the skin of the perineum between the thumb and forefinger (thumb on the inside, finger on the outside or vice versa). Initially, you will feel tight, but the tissue will relax and stretch with time and practice.

Concentrate on relaxing your muscles as you apply pressure. As you become comfortable massaging, increase the pressure just enough to make the perineum begin to sting from the stretching. This same stinging sensation occurs as the baby's head is being born at the end of the pushing stage

