



# Perineal tear advice sheet

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## Information for women and their families

This leaflet is meant to supplement the advice and support given by your doctors and midwives. We would encourage you to ask as many questions as you wish about your tear and the treatment you receive.

### What are the types of tears during childbirth?

Most women giving birth vaginally will experience some tears or grazes to their perineum.

Most tears occur in the perineum, the area between your vaginal opening and anus (back passage). They may be:

- **First degree tears** are small, skin-deep tears which usually heal naturally.
- **Second degree tears** are deeper tears affecting the muscle of the perineum as well as the skin. We recommend that these tears have stitches. The stitches are dissolvable and can sometimes take up to four months to be absorbed completely. If you decide not to be sutured your tear may take longer to heal.

### What is the difference between an episiotomy and a tear?

An **episiotomy** is a cut made by your doctor or midwife through your vaginal wall and perineum to make more space to deliver your baby. A **tear** happens as your baby stretches your vagina and pelvic floor during birth.



## What can I do to speed up healing of my episiotomy or tear?

- **Keep the area clean.** Have a bath or a shower at least once a day and change your sanitary pads regularly (wash your hands both **before** and **after** you do this). This will reduce the risk of infection.
- **Drink at least two to three litres of water every day and eat a healthy balanced diet** (fruit, vegetables, cereals, wholemeal bread, and pasta). This will make sure that your bowels open regularly and prevent you from becoming constipated.
- You will be offered **regular pain relief** such as paracetamol and ibuprofen to help with any discomfort. This will allow you to move more easily; walking helps prevent stiffness and reduces swelling.

## Will pelvic floor exercises help?

Yes, pelvic floor exercises are very important as these will increase the circulation of blood to the area and help you to heal. They will also help you to regain your muscle tone, preventing incontinence.

These exercises can be started immediately and are very easy to do. You should begin by trying to tighten the area, squeezing all the muscles in your vagina and around your anus. Do batches of 10 quick “lifts” and then move onto holding the area tightly for the count of 10, repeating 10 times.

To start with, the exercises can be performed lying down and then progressed to a sitting or standing position. Your midwife will be able to advise you further about pelvic floor exercises and can refer you to a specialist physiotherapist for more intensive muscle training if needed.

**This leaflet has been produced with and for women and their families**

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

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