

Perineal Massage

Perineal Massage for Birth Preparation

Perineal massage is an excellent preparation massage to help prevent episiotomy and tears associated with childbirth. This is a *gentle* massage to be performed with clean hands, good quality cold-pressed oil that has added vitamin E to prevent it from going rancid. The perineum is the area between the vagina and the rectum. The pressure of the baby's head on the tight tissue is prone to tearing, or having your OB (obstetric surgeon) do an episiotomy to allow for a faster delivery. Midwives and some OB's will do a perineal massage at the time of birth as the baby emerges. You may want to discuss this possibility with them ahead of time and bring your own oil to the birth with that massage planned. You may use perineal massage as an opportunity to tune into relaxing the pelvic floor and all the surrounding muscles. The massage may be done by yourself, or by a partner. It will never be performed by your massage therapist. Some partners may choose to do it after making love, when the area is softer, better lubricated and more relaxed.

Cautions

- Avoid the urinary opening to prevent infections - avoid massage if there is currently an infection
- Do not perform massage if there is a herpes outbreak
- Do not insert hands high up into the vagina opening, only about 1 inch. You are only concerned with gently stretching the vaginal opening and the skin toward the anal area

Directions

Begin to perform this massage in the last month of your pregnancy. Find a comfortable position. If you are doing this yourself, you may want to set one leg up on a stool or on top of the closed toilet seat. If you can reach between your legs in a slightly reclined position, you may try that. If your partner is doing this for you, you may want to lay down in a reclined position, with support under one side of your back so that you are at a slight angle

1. Begin by applying the lubrication in a circular sweep around the vaginal opening.
2. Once the area feels warmed up, begin gently stretching the edges of the opening.
3. Pay special attention to the area of the skin between the vagina and the anus. Try a coin rub between the thumb and index finger, rubbing them together with the perineal skin between them. If you have had a previous tear or episiotomy, go gently, but give this area special attention.
4. This should only take about 5 minutes. You do not want to overwork this sensitive area.



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"The perineum was examined after the delivery in terms of episiotomy or tear and its severity degree. The second stage of delivery was significantly shorter in the massage group than the control group and the massage group had significantly more intact perineum. In addition, lower episiotomy and lower first- and second-degree perineal tears were seen in the massage group in comparison with the control one. The findings showed that the perineal massage in the second stage of labor increases perineal integrity and decreases perineal traumas (episiotomy and tears)."

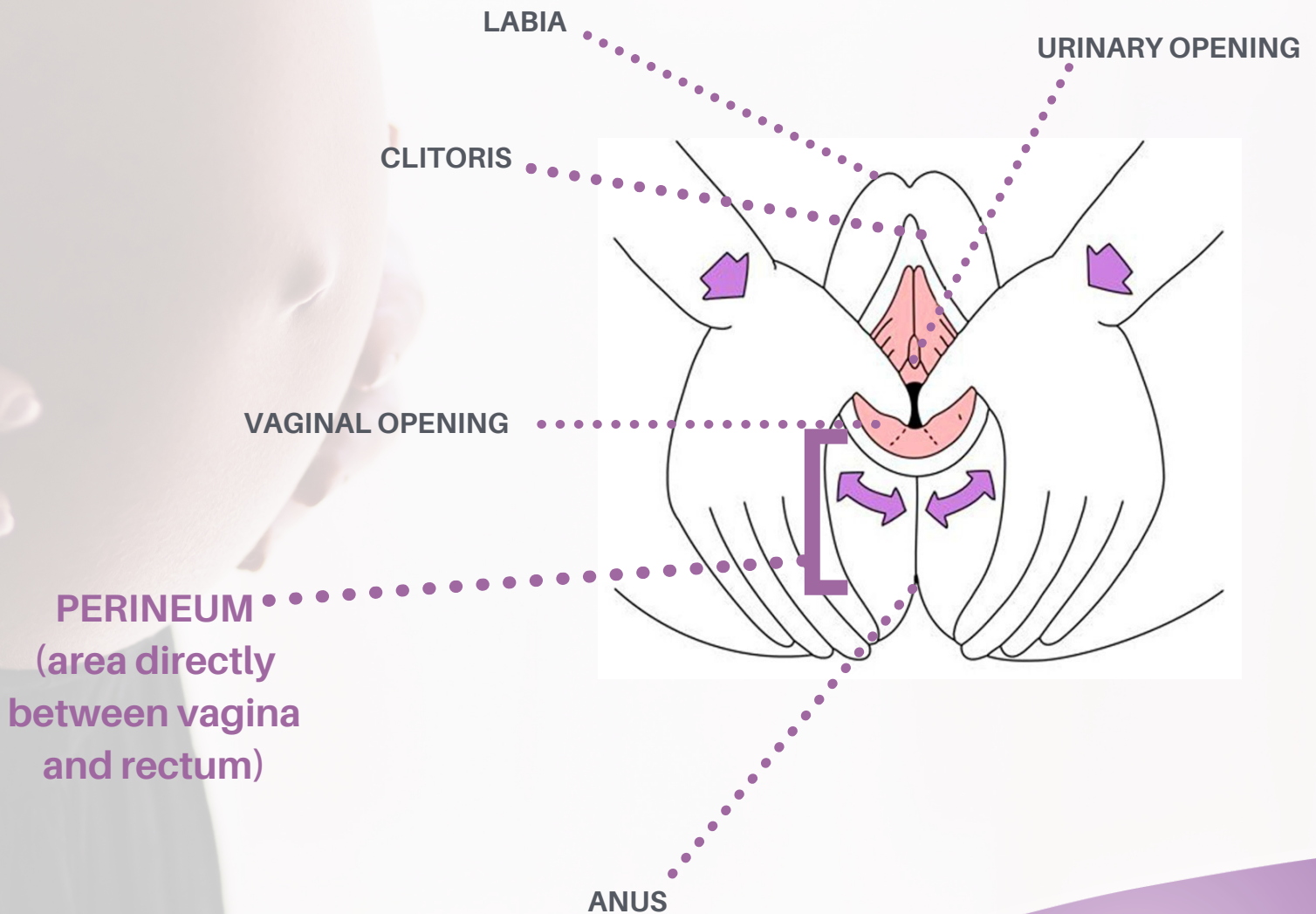


Illustration Source: FisioterapiaOnline
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1UqAQIcuNw>



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