

# Scar Tissue Management Post Natal

This leaflet explains the management of post natal scar tissue in the perineal and caesarean section areas. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

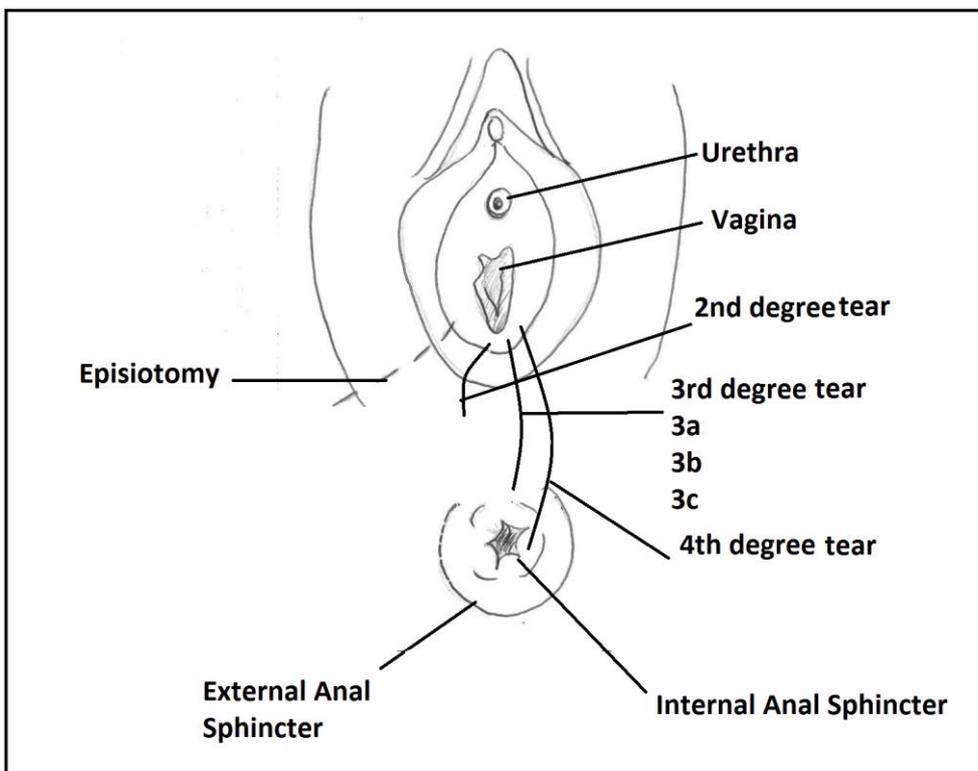
## Postnatal perineal scar massage

If you have had an episiotomy or a perineal tear, the scar tissue around the area can become tight and may become attached to layers below. This may cause discomfort during intercourse and during activity. By massaging the perineal area, you can reduce your scar tissue.

## When should I start massaging?

Wait until you have had your postnatal check which is usually at six weeks. Ensure your stitches have fully healed before beginning. You should not start massage if you have any vaginal infection as this could make it worse.

## The perineal area



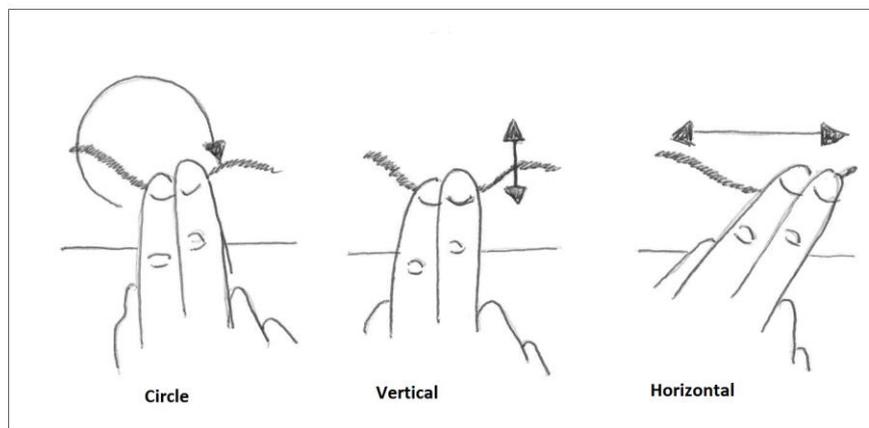
**Perineum** = the area between the vagina opening to the anus  
**IAS**= Internal anal sphincter  
**EAS**= External anal sphincter  
**2<sup>nd</sup> degree**: involving perineal  
**3a**: less than 50% EAS  
**3b**: More than 50% EAS  
**3c**: Both EAS and IAS  
**4<sup>th</sup>**: EAS and IAS and anorectal mucosa

## How?

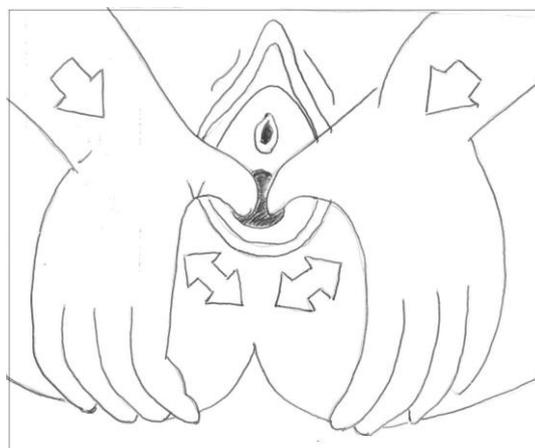
1. It helps to have had a warm bath or use a warm compress before starting in order to help to relax the muscles and increase blood flow to the area
2. Make yourself comfortable: lying or semi sitting, use pillows.
3. Use oil or lubrication for comfort – e.g. almond, coconut or olive oil (as long as you are not allergic to it)
4. You should massage the scar tissue in three directions for 5-10 minutes a day (see below).

## Technique - Perineal massage

1. Start externally. With your thumb or fingers as below apply pressure and firmly massage into the scar along the line of the scar, across the scar and in circles over the scar. Work over all parts of the external scar towards the anus.



2. For internal stitches: Get into a comfortable position with your legs gently opened. Insert your thumb into the entrance of your vagina so the pad of your thumb is facing down towards the anus. Place your index finger over your perineum; you should be able to feel the scar beneath your finger.



3. Next, apply a firm pressure on the back of the vaginal opening with your thumb and make firm “U” shapes (going from 4 to 8 as if imagining a clock) over the scar area. This might feel a little bit tender to start with.

## Caesarean scar massage

It takes approximately **six weeks** for your scar to heal fully. It may feel tender, itchy and numb in the first few weeks and can heal to be pink or red and slightly raised. Once healed, it should not be excessively painful or sensitive or prevent you from doing any of your everyday activities. It can take two years for your scar to fade to a smooth white line.

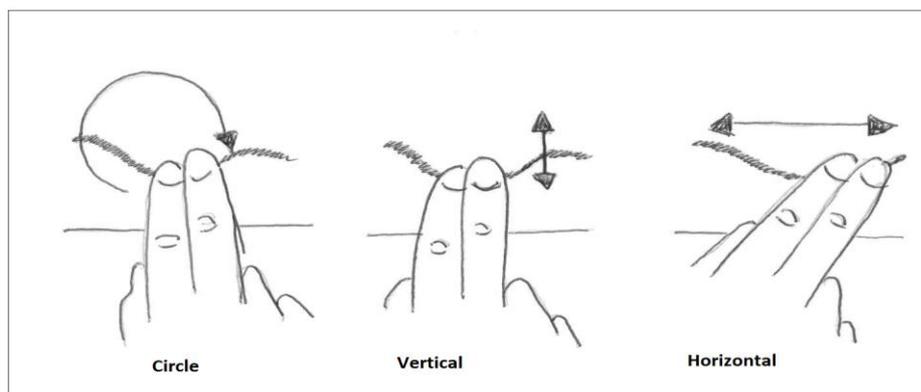
As your scar heals, the scar tissue can attach to the skin and muscles around it which can make the scar sensitive, painful or raised. Scar massage can help reduce these adhesions. Wait until your scar is **fully healed** before starting scar massage – there must be no open areas or scabs. Check with your GP or Consultant before you begin if you have concerns.

## How?

1. It helps to use a warm compress before starting to help in order to relax the muscles and increase blood flow to the area
2. Make yourself comfortable: lying or semi sitting, use pillows.
3. You can use oil for comfort e.g. almond, coconut or olive oil.
4. Aim to do this for ten minutes per day.

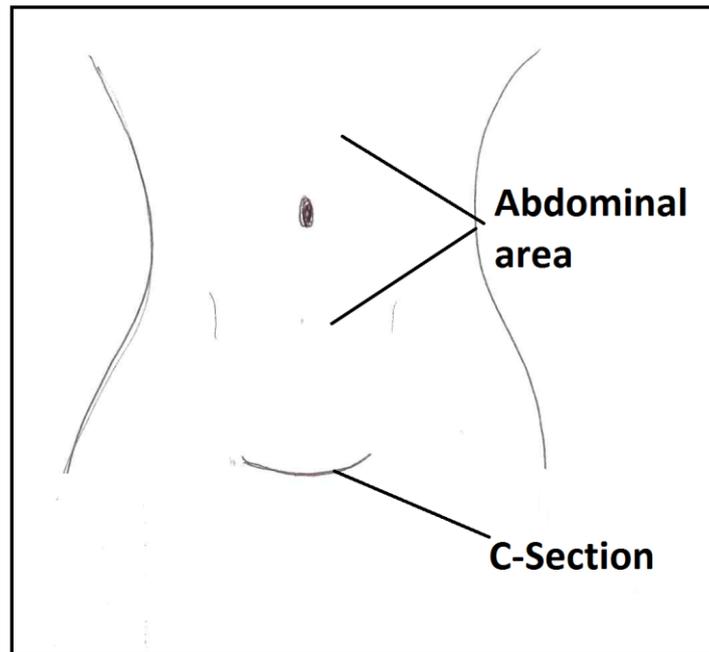
## Technique - Caesarean section massage

1. Start by gently massaging around the scar, focusing on tissues immediately above and below it. As it becomes less sensitive, place the pads of your fingertips just above the scar line. Move the skin gently up and down, side to side and in circles along the length of the scar. Work more into areas of resistance where the skin feels tighter. You should feel stretching in the tissue but it should not be painful.

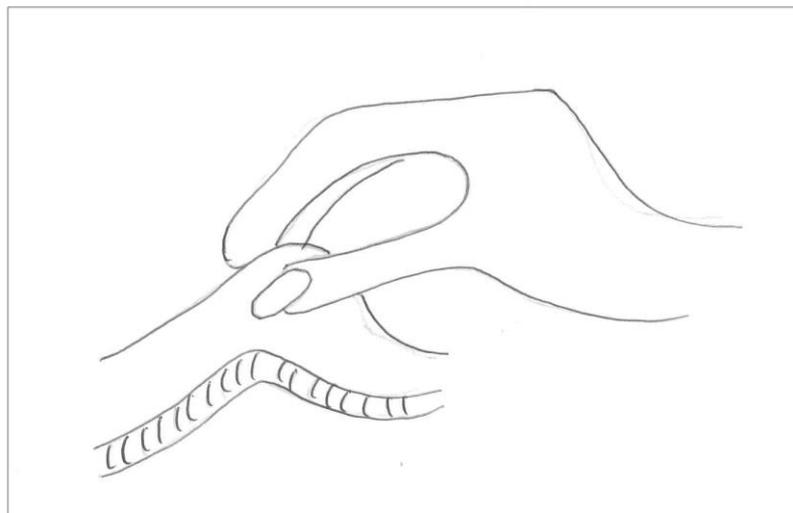


2. As this becomes easier, push your fingers firmly down into the tummy muscles and repeat the up and down, side to side and circular movements. Feel free to massage the entire lower tummy area. You must be firm but not aggressive as you massage: let pain be your

guide. A slight tingling sensation as you stretch tissues is normal. Keep massaging into deeper areas as pain allows.



3. When you are comfortable with the first two, roll the scar between your thumb and finger. It may take some days or weeks before you can do this one.



## Continuing problems - when to seek advice

If you have any of the problems below seek advice from your GP, who can then refer you to a Women's Health Physiotherapist.

- If you have excessive weakness around the abdominal area
- Heaviness/bulging sensation in your perineal area
- Any problems with loss of bladder or bowel control – such as wetting, soiling or having to rush to the toilet.
- Difficulties or pain with sexual intercourse.

## Glossary of terms

- **Episiotomy:** a midline incision along a straight line from the lowest edge of the vaginal opening toward the anus.
- **Perineal:** describing the area between the vagina opening to the anus
- **External anal sphincter:** a circular muscle that constricts a passage or closes a natural orifice. When relaxed, a sphincter allows materials to pass through the opening. When contracted, it closes the opening
- **Internal anal sphincter:** as above but located inside the external sphincter.

## Useful sources of information

You may find it useful to contact some of the following organisations for further information after your delivery

- Pelvic, Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy: [www.pogp.csp.org.uk](http://www.pogp.csp.org.uk)
- Continence Foundation [www.continence-foundation.org.uk](http://www.continence-foundation.org.uk)
- Women's Health [www.womenshealthlondon.org.uk](http://www.womenshealthlondon.org.uk)
- Patient UK [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your perineal area, please contact our women's health physiotherapy team on: 020 8725 1333 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 3pm).

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

