

Antenatal Perineal Massage

This leaflet provides information about perineal massage. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

What is perineal massage?

Perineal massage is a stretching of the perineal tissue in preparation for birth. The perineum is the area between the vagina and the anus (back passage). As your baby moves through the birth canal this area needs to stretch and relax.

Perineal massage has been shown to decrease the likelihood of perineal trauma and needing stitches by 9% and decreases perineal postnatal pain by 32%. Perineal massage can be performed by you and / or your partner. You can start perineal massage from 34 weeks of your pregnancy.

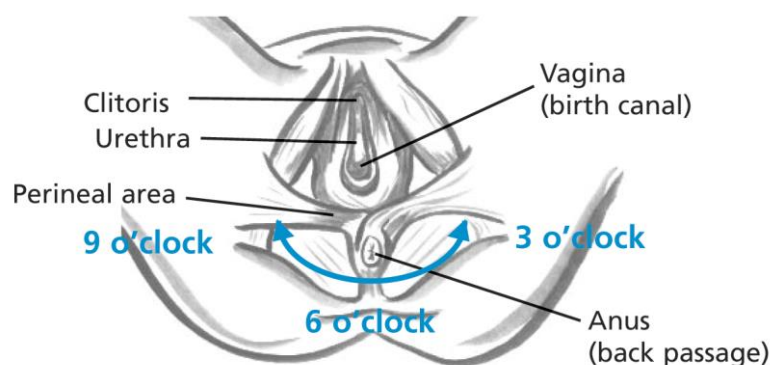
How do I prepare to do perineal massage?

Prepare: A mirror can help you to locate the perineal area so you can see what you are doing. Hands should be clean with nails clipped. Make sure your bladder is empty. Some women find having a warm bath beforehand can help relax and soften the tissue.

Position: Position yourself so that you are comfortable. You could try:

- Squatting down (supporting yourself by leaning back against a wall or forwards on a bed or chair)
- Sitting on the toilet
- Standing with one foot raised on a chair / toilet
- Leaning back or kneeling on all fours.

What technique do I use?



Lubricate your fingers well using a vegetable oil (such as almond or olive oil). Insert one index finger or thumb up to two to five centimetres into the vagina. Massage the oil into the tissues of the perineum and inside the vagina. To prepare the tissues, start by pressing towards the anus and then use a firm sweeping movement down and towards your back passage. Imagine your fingers are sweeping like clock hands from 3 to 9 o'clock (see diagram). Continue this for two minutes maintaining pressure throughout.

Following this apply a firm pressure at 5, 6 and 7 on the imaginary clock. Hold each stretch until you feel a burning, stinging sensation for approximately two minutes.

This technique may be painful / cause stinging sensation – this is normal.

You can also practise contracting and relaxing your pelvic floor muscles then following this relaxation with a further stretch. Initially you may experience some discomfort but this should lessen over time. You should aim to gradually build up the intensity and duration of the stretch over the coming weeks.

How often should I do perineal massage?

Aim to practise the techniques three to four times per week. Each session may last between 5-10 minutes.

Useful sources of information

Pelvic Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy Fit for Birth – Essential exercise and advice https://pogp.csp.org.uk/system/files/publication_files/POGP-FFBirth.pdf

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about perineal massage, please contact the Pelvic Health Physiotherapy Team on 020 8725 1333 (Monday to Friday). Out of hours, please leave a voicemail message and we will contact you as soon as possible.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments, and services offered at our hospitals, please visit 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 wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** 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

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

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: PHY_APM_02 **Published:** December 2022 **Review date:** December 2024