

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?

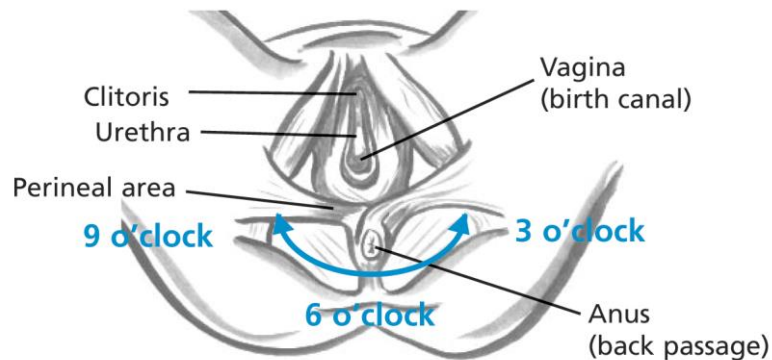
Prepare: A mirror can help you to locate the perineal area so you can see what you are doing. Hands should be clean with nails clipped. Make sure your bladder is empty. Some women find having a warm bath beforehand can help relax and soften the tissue.

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 natural 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 or cause a stinging sensation – which is normal. You can also practise contracting and relaxing your pelvic floor muscles then follow 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 3-4 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: [Fit for Birth | POGP](#)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Was this information helpful? Yes / No

Please let us know, contact

patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk and include the leaflet title.

Thank you.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS 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: MAT_APM_LP_03 **Published:** June 2025 **Review date:** June 2027