

Perineal Wound Breakdown

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

What is perineal wound breakdown?

After the birth of your baby, your perineum may have been sutured (stitched) to repair a tear or cut. The perineum is the area between your vagina and anus (back passage).

Occasionally these stitches can become loose, leaving an opening or gap in your wound. This is called perineal wound breakdown and is usually due to an infection or pressure on the stitches caused by bleeding underneath the wound.



What are the symptoms of perineal wound breakdown?

Symptoms of perineal wound breakdown include one or more of the following:

- increase in perineal pain (difficulty walking or sitting)
- yellow or green vaginal discharge
- stitches which are loose or separated
- feeling unwell, or flu like symptoms such as a high temperature
- burning sensation or pain around the wound site when passing urine
- presence of redness, hardness or swelling around the wound.
- Your Community Midwife will check your stitches for signs of infection. If they suspect

an infection, they may swab your wound and send it to the laboratory to find out if any specific bugs are causing an infection.

What is the treatment for wound breakdown?

Most women with perineal wound breakdown will be given a short course of antibiotics by their GP or obstetrician and advised to take painkillers such as paracetamol. It may also help to take anti-inflammatory pain relief such as ibuprofen which is safe to take whilst breastfeeding your baby.

If the infection is making you unwell, you may be referred to hospital for a course of intravenous antibiotics (via a drip). After this treatment, we will offer you an appointment in the hospital's Perineal Health Clinic for support until your wound has fully healed.

Will the wound be re-stitched?

It is unlikely that your wound will be re-stitched, especially if there is infection present, as this can trap the infection inside and the infected tissue may not come together very well. Your midwife or GP will advise what is best for you.

What can I expect as the wound heals?

Perineal wounds that have broken down usually heal well with time. During the healing process, new tissue gradually forms in the gap where the stitches were. The healing time frame can vary from person to person and will depend on the extent of the wound.

What can I do at home to help my wound to heal?

- Try to keep the wound as clean and dry as possible.
- Shower rather than soaking in a bath, avoid using shower gel or soap on the wound and only apply water to the wound.
- After washing, let the wound dry naturally, do not rub it with a towel.
- Change your sanitary pad regularly (every two hours).
- In the privacy of your own home, try to leave your underwear off at night and let the wound 'air dry'.
- Avoid constipation by drinking plenty of water and maintaining a healthy balanced diet including fruit and vegetables.
- Regular pelvic floor exercises help healing by increasing blood flow to the wound.
- Download the NHS Squeezy app for guidance on how to do these exercises (see the link below).

Will the wound cause me problems in the future?

Most women who experience a perineal wound breakdown have no further problems once the wound has healed. The wound will not break down again during exercise or sexual intercourse.

A perineal wound can sometimes 'over heal' leading to red patches of tissue called

granulation tissue. Occasionally, this becomes uncomfortable and may bleed, however it usually gets better with time and does not need any treatment.

If your perineum does not improve or you are in significant discomfort, a perineal specialist midwife, consultant obstetrician or urogynaecologist at the Perineal Health Clinic can treat it painlessly using silver nitrate. A midwife or doctor at the clinic will discuss whether this treatment is suitable for you.

What can I expect with future births?

If you experience a perineal wound breakdown once, it doesn't mean you will experience this again with a future birth.

If you are worried about this happening in future pregnancies, please tell your midwife or obstetrician and they can refer you to the Perineal Health Clinic. The team at the clinic will discuss your previous birth(s) and give you advice on ways to reduce the risk of perineal damage during childbirth.

More information

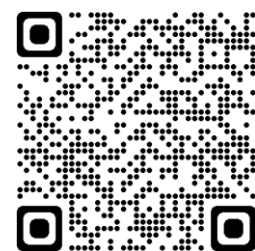
Further information can be found on the websites below.



Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists: perineal tears
www.rcog.org.uk/for-the-public/perineal-tears-and-episiotomies-in-childbirth



NHS Squeezy app to help with pelvic floor exercises
www.squeezyapp.com





NHS digital self-management app to help with pelvic floor exercises
<https://app.getubetter.com/go-to-app?url=request-access/request-access/1/a2cc63e065705fe938a4dda49092966f>



Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your perineal wound, please contact your GP or Maternity Helpline on 020 8725 2777.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit <https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-information-public/>

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.

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

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

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

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.



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