

PERINEAL MASSAGE FOR BIRTH PREPARATION

WOMEN'S
WELLNESS

project



WOMEN'S WELLNESS PROJECT

34 WEEK GESTATION APPOINTMENT

WITH A WOMENS HEALTH PHYSIOTHERAPIST

34 weeks is an important time to see your women's health physiotherapist.

At the appointment your physiotherapist should go through a pre birth assessment with you.

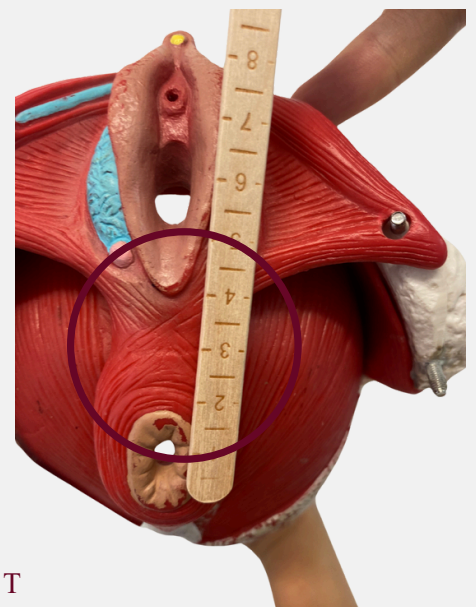
This assessment is designed to assess your risk of developing pelvic floor dysfunction postnatally.

It is also a very important appointment to assess the length of your perineum to determine your risk of tearing. This is an independent factor and we are aware that anything can happen at the time of the birth but this is an objective measure we can work on over the last few weeks of your pregnancy.

At your 34 week appointment your physiotherapist can measure your perineum externally as seen in the image. We ideally would like to see that your perineum is longer than 4cm and when you push down we want to see some stretch.

Your WH physiotherapist should also go through perineal massage.

AN INCREASED LENGTH OF YOUR PERINEUM DECREASES YOUR RISK OF HAVING A MORE EXTENSIVE TEAR (GRADE 3 & 4)



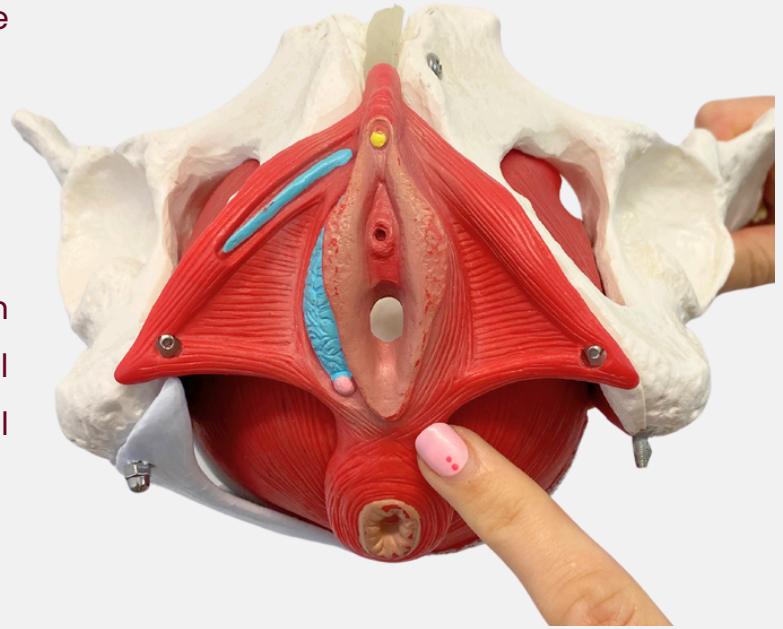
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PERINEAL MASSAGE

To understand how perineal massage can help you we need to understand what the perineum is.

What is the perineum?

The perineum is the region located between the vagina and the anus. During a vaginal birth, this area undergoes substantial stretching and is susceptible to tearing.



RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT MASSAGING AND STRETCHING THE PERINEAL MUSCLES CAN POTENTIALLY REDUCE THE RISK OF PERINEAL TEARS BY APPROXIMATELY 9% ALONE.

Women that have consistently practice perineal massage do not report the extremes of stinging and burning that often accompany the birth of their baby's head. It has also been recorded that, perineal massage decreases the rates of ongoing perineal pain at 3 months post-delivery.

Please discuss and if comfortable practice this with your women's health physiotherapist at 34 weeks gestation if planning a vaginal delivery.



PERINEAL MASSAGE



Perineal massage can be beneficial in various situations, including:

- First vaginal birth (including VBAC - Vaginal Birth After Cesarean)
- Childbirth following a previous history of episiotomy or tearing, resulting in scar tissue
- Presence of an overactive pelvic floor, a condition that can be diagnosed by a women's health physiotherapist or gynaecologist, and is often associated with conditions like pelvic girdle pain
- Subsequent births, especially if the technique was found effective in previous deliveries

◆ WHEN SHOULD YOU BEGIN ◆ PERINEAL MASSAGE?

It's advisable to start perineal massage around the 34-35 week mark of your pregnancy.

◆ HOW FREQUENTLY ? ◆

1-2 x per week (Evidence based)

◆ WHAT IF YOU DO IT EVERY DAY? ◆

Performing perineal massage more frequently than this recommendation showed no increased benefit.

◆ WHAT DO I NEED? ◆

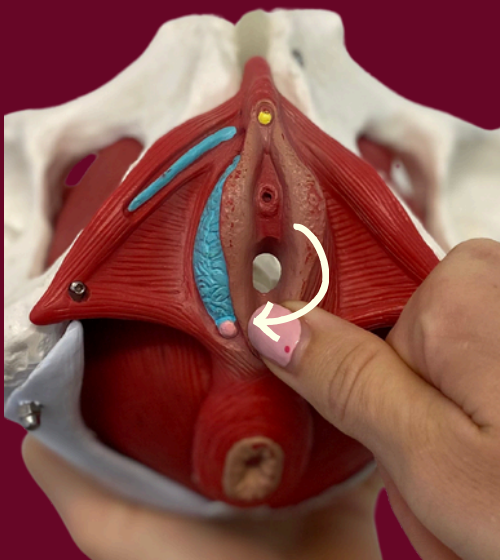
Lube
Your thumb
If someone else is helping you they will use their index finger



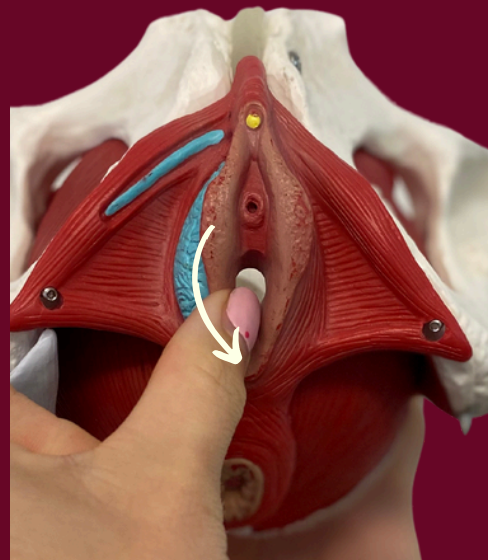
PERINEAL MASSAGE

1. Thoroughly wash your hands.
2. Apply a suitable lubricant to your fingers.
3. Lay in a semireclined position with legs relaxed and out to the side. Please support your legs if you have pelvic girdle or pubic symphysis pain.
4. Gently insert one finger or your thumb into the vagina, reaching about 2-3cm inside.
5. Begin by pressing your finger outward towards the vaginal wall at the 3 o'clock position, then sweep your finger downward towards the anus, maintaining consistent pressure.
6. Repeat the same motion by pressing outward against the vaginal wall at the 9 o'clock position, and again, sweep down towards the anus.

STEP 5
REPEAT 10 TIMES



STEP 6
REPEAT 10 TIMES



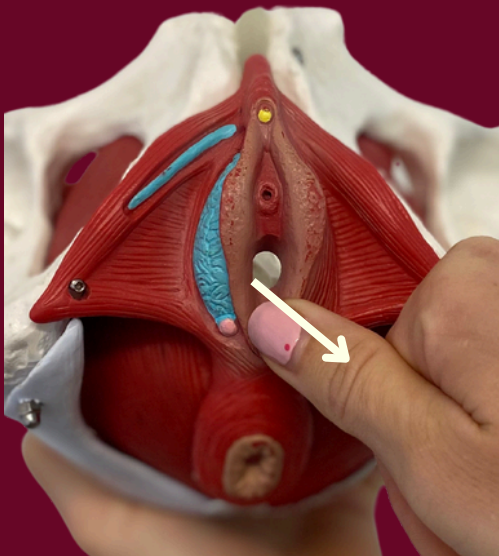
*IF YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE DOING
THIS*

YOU CAN GET SOMEONE ELSE TO REPEAT THESE ABOVE STEPS OR YOU CAN VISIT YOUR WOMENS
HEALTH PHYSIOTHERAPIST FOR EXTRA GUIDANCE.

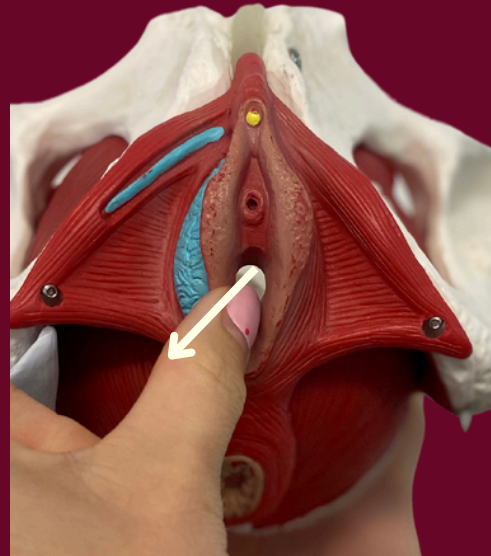
PERINEAL MASSAGE (ADDITIONAL STRETCH)

1. Lay in a semireclined position as above
2. Gently insert one finger or your thumb into the vagina, reaching about 2-3cm inside.
3. Press your finger outward towards the vaginal wall at the 5 o'clock position, Contract you pelvic floor and as you relax **press on the muscle**. By **stretching** the muscle **while you pratice relaxing** this will also help you during labour.
4. Repeat the same motion by pressing against the vaginal wall at the 7 o'clock position, and again contract then relax your pelvic floor as you add pressure

STEP 7
REPEAT 10 TIMES



STEP 8
REPEAT 10 TIMES



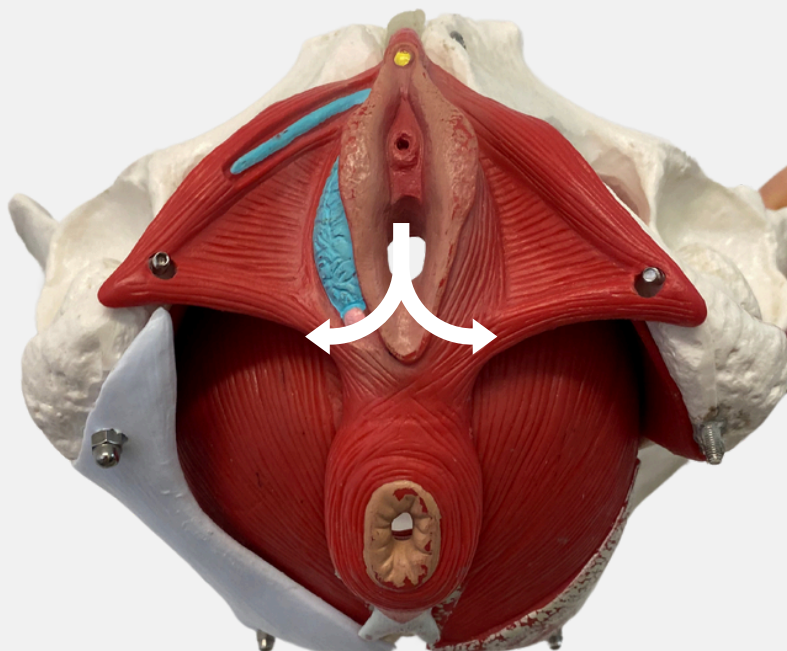
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PERINEAL MASSAGE

You may also sweep in a U shape motion from one side of the vagina all the way to the other side (from 3 o'clock to 9 o'clock) for 1 minute

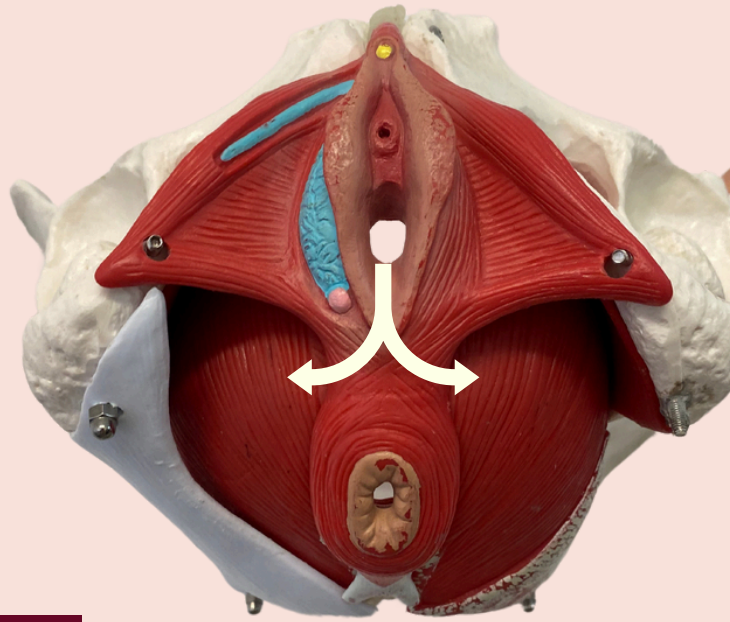
U SHAPE
REPEAT 10 TIMES



- It is important to try to create some pressure behind the circular muscle and downwards (pink arrow) as well as this is going to replicate birth.
- A women's health physiotherapist can show you what perineal massage should feel like to ensure you can recreate this same sensation at home to get the most benefit.

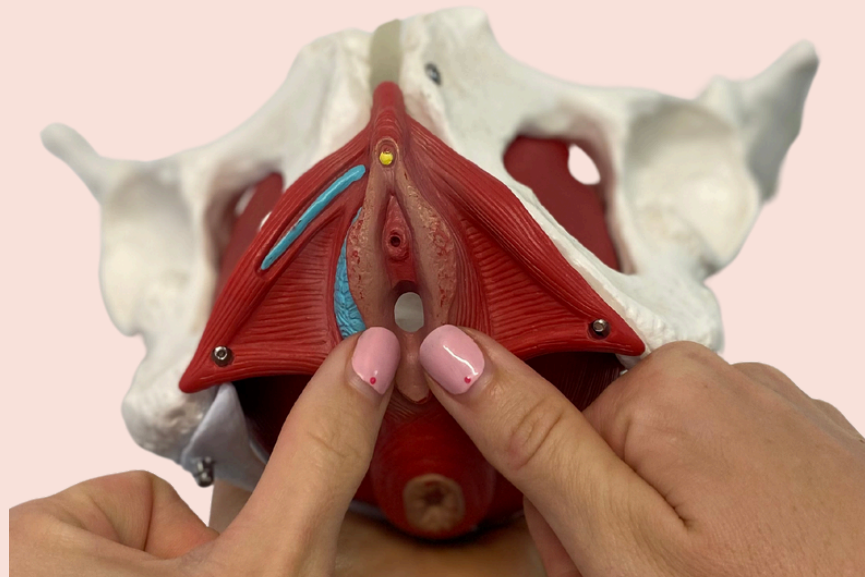
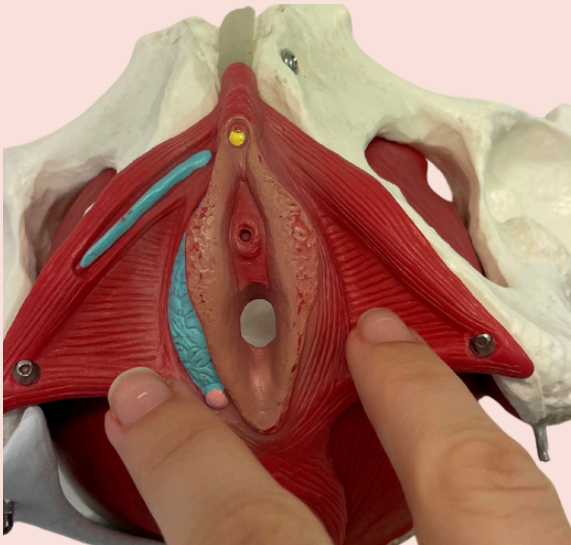
PERINEAL MASSAGE

HOW CAN MY PARTNER/ BIRTH PARTNER/ SUPPORT PERSON HELP?



PEACE SIGN

PEACE SIGN (THUMBS)



Peace Sign:

Pick either to use a peace sign or two thumbs (you do not need to do both) with two fingers in vaginal canal, press down at a 45-degree angle from the midline of the perineum.

Hold for 60s and try to relax with the stretch

You are aiming to replicate the arrows in the first image.



CONTRAINDICATIONS TO PERINEAL MASSAGE

Perineal massage should not be performed in women:

- Prior to 34 weeks of pregnancy (as this is earlier than has been used in trials)
- With cervical shortening
- With placenta praevia or any other condition where there is bleeding from the vagina during the second half of pregnancy
- With severe blood pressure problems in pregnancy
- With an active vaginal infection (herpes, thrush).



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