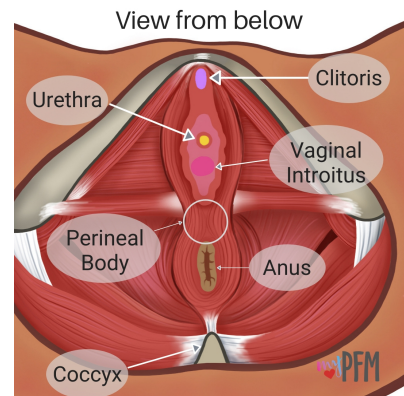


Perineal Massage Instructions

♥ **Perineal massage** is beneficial in relaxing the pelvic floor, especially in the last few weeks of pregnancy to prepare for a vaginal birth. Research shows that **five minutes of massage** just **three or four times a week** can reduce the risk of tearing during delivery, and the pain after delivery.

♥ **The perineum** is the skin between the vaginal opening (or vulva), and the anus. Directly under the skin is the intersection of a number of pelvic floor muscles at the perineal body, which is why relaxing the pelvic floor helps this area have much more flexibility during labor.



♥ How to perform perineal massage

- *Getting ready:* Make sure that our fingernails are short and wash your hands. Find a position that is comfortable and relaxing for you. Try being propped up in bed with your knees bent, or in the shower with one leg propped up. Have a healthy lubricant on hand, but if you are performing the massage in the shower or bath it may not be necessary.
- *Performing massage:* Gently insert a lubricated finger or thumb about one inch into your vagina.
 - Pull down into the tissue directly towards the anus, and hold for a few seconds (hopefully you'll feel a softening/relaxation of the tissue under your finger).
 - Repeat this process at different angles (if the anus is 6:00 on a clock face, go to 5:00, 4:00, 3:00 and 7:00, 8:00 and 9:00).



Perineal Massage Instructions

- You can also try a sweeping motion from 9:00 to 3:00 with a little pressure back towards the rectum.
- *Further tips*
 - While doing any of these motions, breathe deeply and consciously relax your pelvic floor.
 - It is normal to experience some slight burning during the first week or two of performing this massage. Stay very gentle with your pressure initially, then when it stops feeling sensitive you can increase the pressure.
 - You can also eventually progress your finger further into the vaginal opening/birth canal, performing the same motions. This will allow the deeper layers of the pelvic floor to relax in preparation for birth also.
 - Another progression is to use a couple of fingers at the same time and stretch them in opposite directions, to more closely imitate vaginal stretching during delivery.
 - Yet another option is to have your partner perform this massage for you, following the same instructions as above as they sit facing you. Make sure to communicate with them to keep this as a gentle massage!

♥ Perineal massage is not “no pain, no gain.” A slight burning during your first few massages is normal, but keep the pressure gentle enough that it never progresses beyond that. As you perform this massage consistently, you will be able to apply more pressure without discomfort, and you will be well-prepared for labor.