

BIRTHING NATURALLY

Intact Perineum

Much research has gone into the question of whether a woman should have an episiotomy or be allowed to tear. In reality it is best to keep the perineum intact. There are some things you can do during pregnancy to help prevent damage to your perineum.

Strengthen your pelvic floor muscle (Kegel)

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles that work together to support the weight of your internal organs. In the center of the pelvic floor are three openings to allow the passage of urine, feces and your baby through the pelvic floor without causing damage.

The growing weight of your uterus increases the pressure on your pelvic floor, causing it to become weak and slack. This puts you at greater risk of tearing during birth. Keeping the pelvic floor strong helps to ensure your baby's head is positioned properly and that the vaginal wall stays intact while your baby passes through.

Learn to relax the pelvic floor muscle

For your baby to be born, he must pass through your pelvic floor muscle. When your muscle is contracted, the opening for your baby gets smaller. To make the opening as large as possible you will need to relax the muscle, which feels like bulging the muscle out instead of pulling it back in or up.

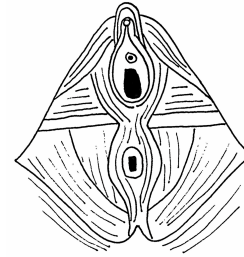
Perineal massage

With clean hands and a gentle oil such as jojoba, carefully slip your thumbs into your vagina to about the first knuckle. With a firm but gentle pressure, stretch the sides of your vagina up to make a U shape. Use enough pressure to feel a stretch, and learn how to relax through the stretching.

Practice good positions

Good pushing positions are usually unfamiliar postures for women in developed countries. Practicing squatting positions gives your muscles the time they need to stretch so the best pushing positions will be comfortable to you during labor. In labor, vary your positions according to comfort. Listen to your body and move when you need to. Squatting, standing, hands and knees and sitting positions all work for pushing.

HOW TO KEGEL



The pelvic floor is a group of muscles working together.

Step One: Locate the Muscle

If you have never exercised your pelvic floor before, it may take you some time to learn how to contract these muscles. An easy way to find them is to try to stop the flow of urine while on the toilet.

Step Two: Contractions

Once you have found the muscle, spend a few minutes contracting the muscle for five to ten seconds at a time. At first you may need to let the contraction go away, but soon you will learn to let go of the contraction.

Step Three: Relaxation

After you have mastered contracting the pelvic floor, learn how to relax it by trying to bulge it or push it out. This will be very similar to the relaxation you use to empty your bladder, so be careful where you try this.