

# The Third and Fourth Degree Perineal Tears Clinical Care Standard

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Australia has introduced a new national standard of care to reduce the risk of women experiencing a serious tear of the perineum at birth. This will help to ensure that women receive appropriate treatment and support throughout their childbirth experience.

## Rates of 3rd and 4th degree perineal tears

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| AUSTRALIA     | 2.5 |
| UNITED STATES | 1.7 |
| OECD          | 1.4 |
| NORWAY        | 1.2 |

per 100 vaginal deliveries without instruments

“ Pregnant women need to be empowered with knowledge and helpful strategies at one of the most powerful moments of their lives ”

Prof Hannah Dahlen AM  
Midwife and Researcher

“ A subject which until recently was taboo, can cause lifelong problems and embarrassment for women who suffer in silence ”

A/Prof Emmanuel Karantanis  
Obstetrician and Urogynaecologist

12x variation  
across Australia in rates of 3rd  
and 4th degree perineal tears



5%  
of first-time vaginal  
births result in a 3rd  
or 4th degree tear

“ Pelvic floor muscle training can help prevent and manage 3rd and 4th degree perineal tears ”

Natalie McConochie  
Physiotherapist

“ It will help women to receive appropriate care before, during and after birthing to optimise their recovery ”

Prof Anne Duggan  
Clinical Director, ACSQHC

32.7  
per 1000 vaginal deliveries  
result in 3rd or 4th degree  
perineal tears



AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION  
ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE

FIND OUT MORE AT:  
[safetyandquality.gov.au/perineal-tears](https://safetyandquality.gov.au/perineal-tears)