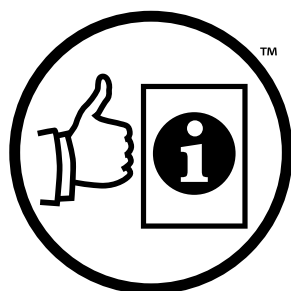




## **Perineal tears**

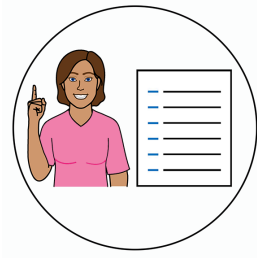
### **How to reduce the risk**

**Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care**



**Easy English**

## Hard words



This book has some hard words.

The first time we write a hard word

- the word is in **blue**
- we write what the hard word means.

## You can get help with this book



You can get someone to help you

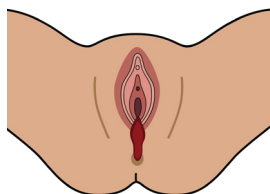
- read this book
- know what this book is about
- find more information.



## About this book

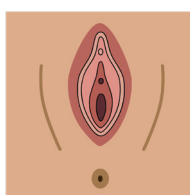
AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION  
ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE

This book is from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.



This book is about

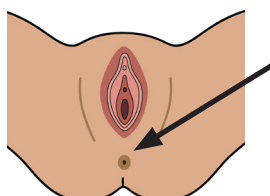
- **perineal tears**



- how to reduce the risk of perineal tears.



A perineal tear is when your **perineum** tears when you have your baby.



Your perineum is the area between the opening of your vagina and your bottom.

You might **not** get a tear when you have a baby.



Tears happen to lots of women when they have babies.

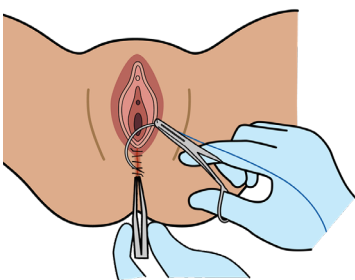
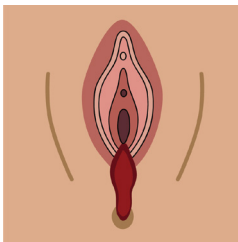
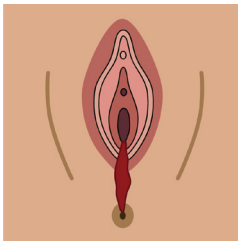
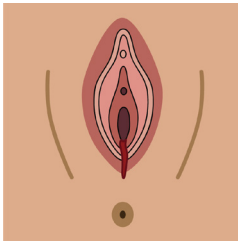
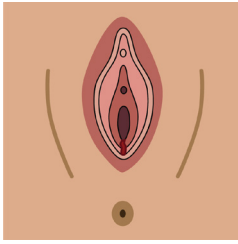
Most tears heal well.

Some tears can be serious.

## Types of tears

There are 4 types of tears

- **first degree**
- **second degree**
- **third degree**
- **fourth degree.**



Women with first degree tears might need stitches - but not often.

Women with second degree tears will need stitches.



Women with a third or fourth degree tear will usually need to have it repaired by a doctor in an operating room.

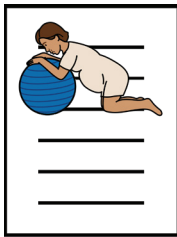
# How to reduce the risk of tears

## Talk to your healthcare team

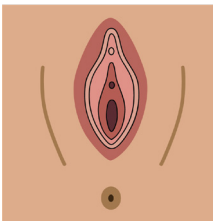


You can talk to your healthcare team about

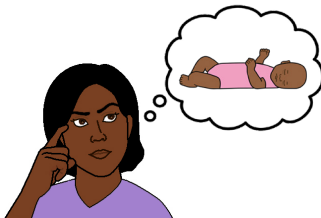
- your **birth history**



- your **birth plan**



- how to reduce the risk of a tear.



Your birth history is information about what happened when you had other babies.



Your birth plan is what you want to happen when you have your baby.

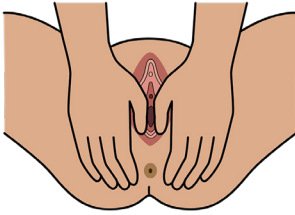
## When you are pregnant



You can do some things when you are pregnant that may reduce the risk of tears during birth.

For example, you can

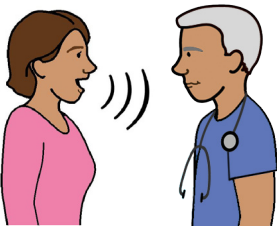
- massage the area between your vagina and bottom from 34 weeks



- do **pelvic floor exercises**.



Pelvic floor exercises make the muscles around your vagina and bottom strong for when you have your baby.



Ask your doctor or **midwife** about learning how to do massage or pelvic floor exercises.



A midwife helps you during pregnancy, when you have your baby and after your baby is born.

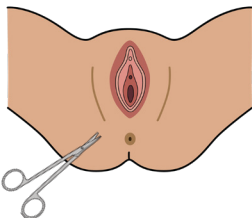
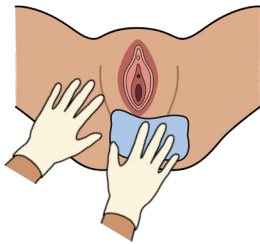
## When you are about to have your baby



You can do some things to reduce the risk of tears when you are about to have your baby.

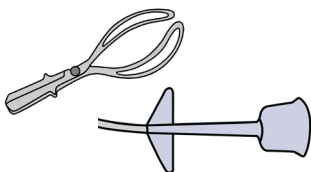
For example

- your midwife can press a warm towel under your vagina when you are ready to push
- your midwife will help you to slow down your pushing when you are having your baby.

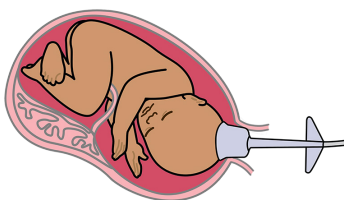


Your doctor or midwife might ask if it is ok to make a cut in the skin at the opening of your vagina

- to reduce the risk of a serious tear



- to help the baby to come out if the doctor wants to use **forceps** or **vacuum**.

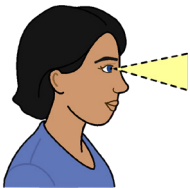


Forceps and vacuum are medical tools that can be used to help your baby out through your vagina.

## If you have a third or fourth degree tear

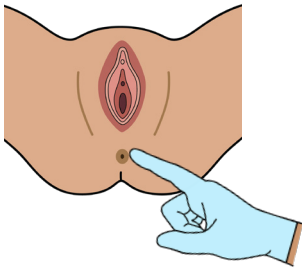


Your doctor or midwife will check to see if you have a serious tear **after** your baby is born.

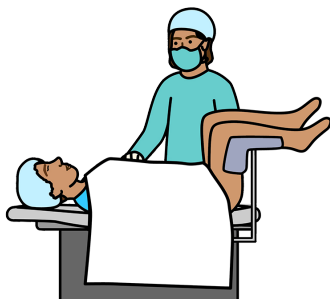


Your doctor or midwife might

- look at the area around your vagina



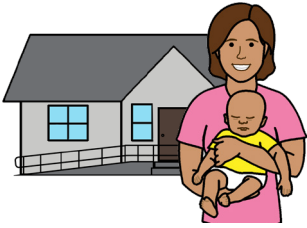
- ask if it is ok to put their finger in your bottom to feel for a tear.



If you have a third or fourth degree tear you will need to have it repaired by the doctor as soon as possible.



## When you are recovering



Different people in your healthcare team will help you get better after you go home.

For example

- your doctor or midwife



- a physiotherapist with special training to help your body get better

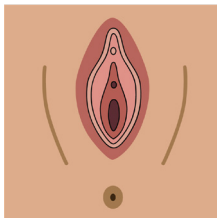


- a psychologist - if you feel sad or worried



- a social worker - for help with daily activities.

## The clinical care standard



The clinical care standard has information about the care women should get

- to reduce the risk of a serious tear
- to get better **after** a serious tear.

You can visit the website

[safetyandquality.gov.au/consumers-perineal-tears](http://safetyandquality.gov.au/consumers-perineal-tears)

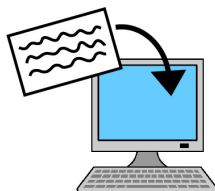
## More information



For more information contact  
Australian Commission on Safety and Quality  
in Health Care.



Call            02 9126 3600



Email           mail@safetyandquality.gov.au



If you need help to speak or listen use the  
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