



Perineal tears

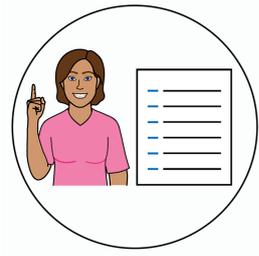
How to reduce the risk

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



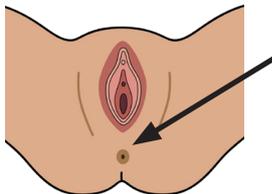
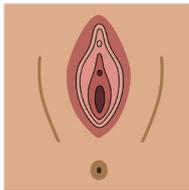
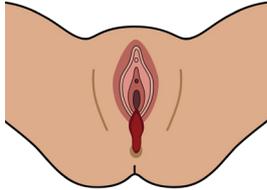
You can get someone to help you

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



About this book

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.

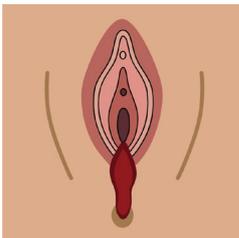
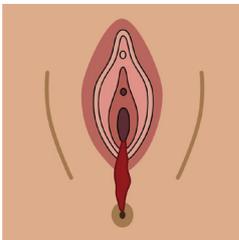
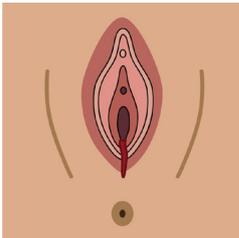
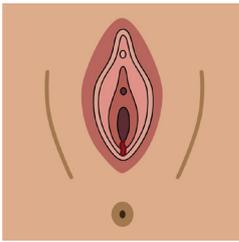
You might **not** get a tear when you have a baby.

Tears happen to lots of women when they have babies.

Most tears heal well.

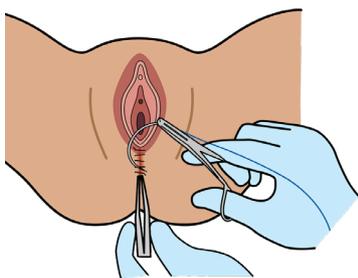
Some tears can be serious.

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.

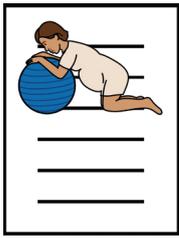
How to reduce the risk of tears

Talk to your healthcare team

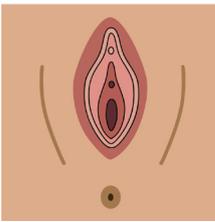


You can talk to your healthcare team about

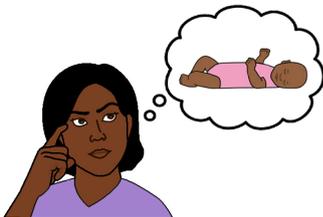
- your **birth history**



- 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

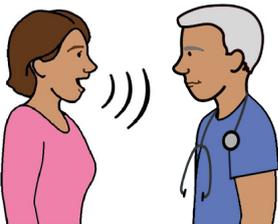


- do **pelvic floor exercises**.

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.



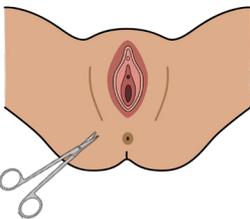
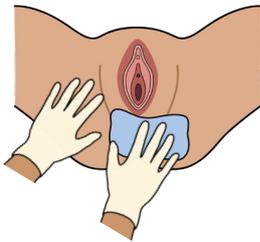
When you are about to have your baby



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

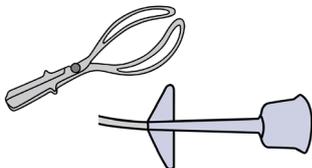
For example

- 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.

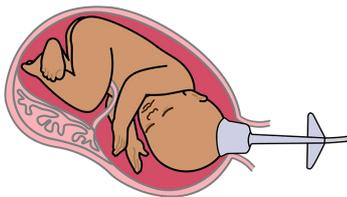


Your doctor or midwife might ask if it is ok to make a cut in the skin at the opening of your vagina

- to reduce the risk of a serious tear



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

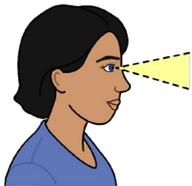


Forceps and vacuum are medical tools that can be used to help your baby out through your vagina.

If you have a third or fourth degree tear

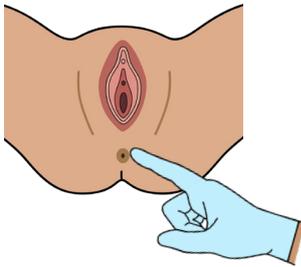


Your doctor or midwife will check to see if you have a serious tear **after** your baby is born.



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

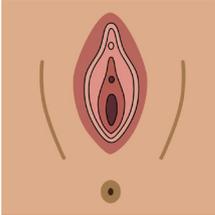


- a psychologist - if you feel sad or worried



- 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

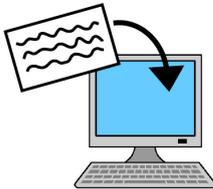
More information



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
National Relay Service.

Call 1800 555 660



Website
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Give the relay officer the phone number you
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