

Perineum Massage

Perineum massage is advised from about 34 to 36 weeks of pregnancy and is designed to **increase the elasticity of the perineum** to enable it to stretch better during labour. Scientific research is ambivalent about its' benefits but anecdotal stories speak of a reduction of tearing in those women who regularly give themselves this massage. Even though the science is unsure, if it won't hurt, which it won't, it is surely worth a try.

In many books it is advised that you get partners to give you the massage but I think it is probably something you want to do yourself, in the privacy of your bathroom- but the choice is ultimately yours of course. After a bath or shower is sometimes a good time to do it.

What you will need:

Unscented massage oil – you can find this in most health stores or else get yourself a special oil for the job. See this website for links to places that sell them.

Mirror (optional)

Privacy!!

Technique:

Wash your hands and make sure your nails aren't too long. Sit in a warm comfortable area, spreading your legs apart in a semi-sitting birthing position, or lift one leg up- the side of the bath or a closed toilet can be a useful prop.. To become familiar with your perineal area you can use a mirror for the first few massages.

Put oil on your forefinger and thumb, and then put your thumb into the vagina, making sure you don't go too far. Begin to massage the area, alternating between rubbing the perineum tissue between your thumb and forefinger, and applying gentle pressure with the thumb, drawing the perineum down until you feel a slight burning sensation. Be gentle with yourself.

Do this several times a week from 34 weeks, and daily from about 36 weeks, working for up to 5 minutes each time. You will find that the area feels thinner and more elastic during that time which should give you confidence in your ability to stretch comfortably during the second stage of labour.

