

Birth by Bushra

A GUIDE FROM BIRTH BY BUSHRA

Perineal Massage Guide

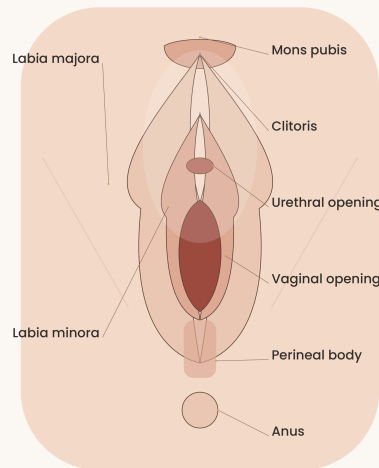
Everything you need to know to prepare your body for birth.
A simple, evidence-informed practice you can begin at
home.



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1 What Is Perineal Massage

Perineal massage is a gentle, hands-on technique that stretches and conditions the skin and muscles of the perineum — the area between the vaginal opening and the anus — in preparation for birth. Practised regularly in the final weeks of pregnancy, it helps the tissue become more elastic and familiar with the sensation of stretching.



A schematic overview of the vulva and perineum, for reference.

2 Why Practice It

As your baby is born, the perineum stretches considerably, and for many women this is the part of labour that feels the most unfamiliar. Research suggests that regular perineal massage in late pregnancy can reduce the likelihood of an episiotomy and may lower the risk of significant tearing, particularly for women having their first baby.

THE EVIDENCE

Studies show perineal massage from around 34 weeks is associated with a reduced need for episiotomy and less perineal trauma overall. Benefits are most consistent for first-time mothers.

3 When to Start

Begin around 34 weeks of pregnancy, once your midwife or doctor has confirmed there is no medical reason to avoid it. Starting earlier than this offers little additional benefit, as the technique works best closest to birth.

- Not recommended before 34 weeks without guidance.
- Avoid if you have an active vaginal infection, herpes outbreak, or if your care provider has advised against it.

- If you are unsure whether it is suitable for you, ask your midwife at your next appointment.

4 How Often

Aim for 5–10 minutes, three to four times a week. Some women prefer daily practice; others find every other day more comfortable. There is no need to push for a daily routine — consistency over several weeks matters far more than frequency in any single week.

5 What You'll Need

- A water-based lubricant or natural oil (such as sweet almond or coconut oil) — avoid baby oil or anything scented.
- Clean hands with short, smooth nails.
- A private, unhurried moment — after a warm bath or shower is ideal, as the tissue is naturally softer.
- A hand mirror, if it's helpful for you to see what you're doing, especially the first few times.

6 Getting Comfortable

Find a position that lets you reach the perineum easily and relax your pelvic floor at the same time. There is no single correct position — choose whatever feels most comfortable and sustainable for a few minutes at a time.

1. Semi-reclined, propped up on pillows with knees bent and relaxed out to the sides.
2. Sitting on the edge of a bed or chair, leaning back slightly with feet supported.
3. Standing with one foot raised on the edge of the bath or a low stool.

7 Create a Relaxing Environment

Oxytocin — the body's natural 'love hormone' — helps you relax and increases blood flow to the area, which makes the massage more comfortable and more effective.



Dim lighting or candles



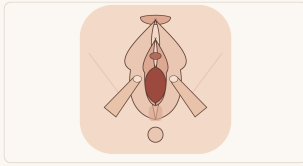
Calm music or sounds



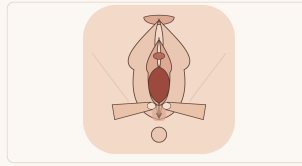
Warm and comfortable space

8 Perineal Massage — The Technique

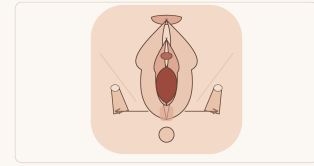
Go slowly. Be gentle. The goal is to stretch, not force. Apply a small amount of lubricant to your thumbs and the perineum, then work through the six steps below.



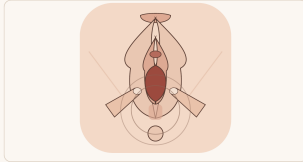
Place your thumbs 3–4 cm inside the vaginal opening.



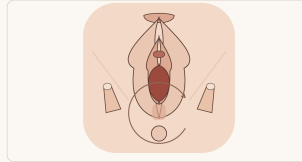
Press downwards towards the anus (gently!).



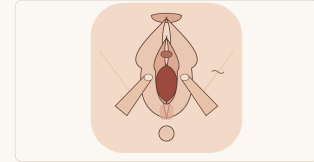
Sweep your thumbs out to the sides, stretching the tissue.



Hold the stretch for 1–2 minutes or until you feel a gentle burning or tingling.



Repeat this U-shape movement for 5–10 minutes.



Breathe deeply and try to keep your body relaxed.

9 Technique

- Breathe slowly throughout.
- Stretch to the point of firm pressure, not pain.
- Focus on relaxing the pelvic floor rather than resisting the stretch.
- Your partner can perform the technique if you are comfortable.
- Consistency is more important than force.

10 Frequently Asked Questions

Should it hurt? No. You should feel stretching but not sharp pain.

Can my partner help? Yes, if you are comfortable and have been shown the correct technique.

What if I miss a few days? Simply restart — there is no need to 'catch up.'

Will it prevent all tears?

No. It may reduce the risk of more significant tears, but it cannot guarantee that tearing will not occur.

Do I have to do it?

No. It is optional, but many women find it helpful for preparing physically and mentally for birth.



Final Thoughts

Perineal massage is one simple, optional way to prepare your body and mind for birth. Consistency matters more than force, comfort matters more than any target, and every step you take builds confidence for the day you meet your baby.

Prepared, supported, and ready — every step of the way.

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