

The Elastolabo[®] Guide to Perineal Massage

How to reduce your risk of perineal tears or need for
episiotomy during childbirth

Mums to be edition – online referenced version

This booklet provides information regarding
the risk of damage to your perineum during
childbirth and the benefits of regular ante-natal
perineal massage with Elastolabo[®].

If you require further information please contact us at info@cederberg.ch

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Your Perineum and Childbirth

Your perineum is the tissue between your vagina and your anus. This tissue needs to be able to stretch during normal (vaginal) childbirth.

Unfortunately, in most women this tissue cannot stretch enough and it can either tear or an episiotomy is needed (a surgical cut into the perineum that is performed by your midwife or the doctor).^{1,2}

The damage caused by perineal tears and/or episiotomy is called perineal trauma.

Perineal trauma can lead to short-term and long-term pain and discomfort.^{3,4,5,6,7}

It is not possible to know beforehand whether or not you will have these problems but, unfortunately, perineal trauma has been reported to occur in up to 85-90% of women.^{8,9,10,11}

Regular massage of your perineum during the last 6-8 weeks of your pregnancy can reduce these risks.^{12,13}

Perineal Trauma

The two main forms of perineal trauma are perineal tears and episiotomy. ¹³

Perineal tears can be described in terms of the severity of the tear and the area of tissue involved. ^{1,2,9,14}

First-degree perineal tears involve the perineal skin only. ⁹

Second-degree perineal tears are more severe than first-degree perineal tears because they involve the wall of the vagina and the associated muscles as well as the perineal skin layer. ⁹

Third-degree perineal tears are less common but the damage now extends to also involve the muscle tissues around the anus. ⁹

Fourth-degree perineal tears are also less common but more severe as the damage now extends inside the rectum. ⁹

An episiotomy is a surgical incision or cut that is performed by a midwife or doctor when they need to help the baby to be born. ^{9,15} However, an episiotomy affects similar tissue layers to those involved when a second-degree tear happens. ¹²

Healing after Perineal Trauma

Perineal tears and episiotomies are usually repaired using stitches.

Repair of the more severe third- and fourth-degree tears needs surgery. ⁹

Perineal tears, episiotomies and the stitches and/or surgery used to repair them often cause pain and discomfort ^{4,5}

20% of woman still have pain after 8 weeks, 9% still have pain at three months ^{4,5,7}

60% of women that have perineal trauma have pain during sex for up to three months after childbirth ⁶

30% of women still have pain during sex six months later and 15% of women still experience painful sex up to three years later ^{6,7}

About one-third of women that have severe perineal trauma involving their anus and/or rectum have some degree of bowel incontinence. ¹⁶

Benefits of Perineal Massage

Perineal massage prepares your perineum so that it stretches more easily during childbirth.

Regular perineal massage during the last two months of pregnancy reduces the risk of perineal tears and the need for episiotomy during childbirth. ¹³

Elastolabo®

Elastolabo® was developed in Switzerland specifically for perineal massage.

Elastolabo® contains the unique ingredient Elastocell® that helps reduce the rigidity of the perineal tissues, making them more extensible (stretchy) and also more elastic.

Elastolabo® is easy and comfortable to apply.

The effectiveness of Elastolabo® has been demonstrated in clinical studies. ^{17,18}

Elastolabo® led to improvements in perineal tissue extensibility (stretchiness) and perineal tissue elastic recovery after 8 weeks of daily application. ¹⁸

Elastolabo® showed a decrease in episiotomy rates compared with reference data. ¹⁸

How you should perform perineal massage

Elastolabo® is for use by pregnant women from week 32 of pregnancy. It may be more comfortable for you to perform the massage after a shower or bath.

1. Carefully wash your hands before applying Elastolabo®.
2. Find a private and comfortable position for the massage.
3. Squeeze some Elastolabo® onto your fingers and apply it to the outside of your vagina.
4. Massage the area around the outside of your vagina for a few minutes in order to increase the blood circulation to these tissues.
5. Now push two fingers (or one or both thumbs) 2 to 3 cm into your vagina and stretch your vagina down, gently, towards your anus, until you feel a tingling sensation. Hold this pressure steady for about two minutes. Release the pressure if you experience pain or discomfort.
6. Continuing to use light pressure, move your fingers to one side of your vagina while pulling outwards and upwards at the same time - gently pulling these tissues forward as though they were being pushed by the baby's head during birth.
7. Still pulling gently, slide your fingers back down to the lower part of your vagina, and again pull the tissues towards your anus. Now repeat the massage on the other side of your vagina so that you have now made a "U-shaped" movement around the inside of your vagina.
8. Continue the massage for 10 minutes using this "U-shaped movement". Try and relax your perineum as much as possible.
9. Massage should be performed daily from week 32 of pregnancy until childbirth.
10. If you feel pain stop the massage and try again the next day or when you are more relaxed.

As your perineum becomes more extensible (stretchy) and elastic over time you can gradually increase the pressure you apply. You may find it easier to apply the massage pressure using your thumbs rather than your fingers.

When not to do Perineal Massage

Do not use Elastolabo® if you are hypersensitive to any component in the product. Do not perform perineal massage if your pregnancy is at risk of pre-term delivery, if you have a low-lying placenta, if perineal massage induces contractions or if you have premature rupture of membranes (vaginal bleeding). Do not perform perineal massage if you have vaginal herpes, vaginal thrush, or other vaginal or urinary infection.

If you are unsure about these, or have other concerns, discuss them with your midwife or doctor before using Elastolabo®.

Please read the product instruction leaflet for more details on perineal massage and for important information before using Elastolabo®.

What is in Elastolabo®?

Elastolabo® contains the following: Polyglyceryl-3 Beeswax, Prunus amygdalus var. dulcis oil (sweet almond oil), Citric acid, Ascorbyl Palmitate, Tocopherol (Vitamin E), Lecithin, Petrolatum, Hydrogenated Castor Oil, Silica, Lysine Carboxymethyl Cysteinate (Elastocell®), Paraffinum Liquidum

Elastolabo® is fragrance free, latex free, non-staining, non-irritant and non-sensitising.

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How to get Elastolabo®

Elastolabo® is now available on prescription. Pregnant women are entitled to free NHS prescriptions. Ask your Midwife or Doctor.

Elastolabo® can also be bought directly from our website: www.elastolabo.co.uk or you can ask at your local pharmacy.

You can find more information on our website www.elastolabo.co.uk including an on-line version of this guide that contains references for the information provided.

Contact us at info@cederberg.ch or www.cederberg.ch

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