

PERINEAL STRETCHING EXERCISES FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

In my experience, the biggest factor in preventing tears during birth are frequent and deliberate squatting flat footed during pregnancy, following by essential oils sprayed or rubbed into the perineum daily.

Squat whenever you need to be close to the ground! Never bend over at the waist, bend your knees and keep your feet flat. This may take some practice at first, but in time you will be able to just squat right down with no problem. **Squat 30-60 times a day!** Squat to do household chores, to dress toddlers, to garden, to eat your snacks, instead of sitting in your favorite chair to rest, squat in front of it letting it support your back.

Research in cultures where women routinely squat has found that they just do not tear when they have their babies. The tissues of their perineums are very supple and elastic. Squatting as much as you possibly can, not only helps to make your pelvic floor flexible and supple, it also helps the baby to descend well into your pelvis before labor.

Perineal stretching is another exercise that you may choose to do. Since most of us have not squatted since childhood, our pelvic floors are either lax or we have strengthened the muscles opposing openness and elasticity.

The purpose of this exercise is to help you, the mother, to learn to relax and feel comfortable with the sensations of stretching and burning which occur as the baby's head opens muscles and tissues of your perineum during birth.

You should start to do this exercise at about **34 weeks**, six weeks before your baby's due date. Don't start too soon, wait for the hormones of pregnancy to soften the tissue, otherwise it is really more uncomfortable than helpful.

A good time to do it is after a warm bath when you are relaxed.

A written description of the exercise is as follows:

Using clean hands, put your thumb (or have your partner do this) about 1 to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches inside your vagina. Press gently but firmly downward towards your rectum. You may feel a little discomfort, maybe even experience tingling. A little discomfort is fine, but burning is not. These tissues are extremely sensitive, and may even be a little swollen, and with too much pressure you could cause bruising. Keep steady pressure

and move fingers or thumbs from side to side & back and forth along both sides, in a U-shaped motion on the lower half of the vagina.

Continue this for 3-5 minutes. This can be repeated daily and gradually with increased pressure and working up to 10 minutes.

After about a week, you will notice an increase in stretchiness in the area.

For lubrication use extra virgin olive oil, KY jelly or even better use essential oils.

Essential oils have to shown to be very effective at helping to prepare the perineal tissues for birth.

Combine in a glass spray bottle:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup fractionated coconut oil, sweet almond oil or virgin olive oil

20 drops roman chamomile,

40 drops geranium,

20 drops sandalwood

10 drops frankincense

Open the labia slightly and spray once **every time** you use the bathroom.

You can purchase these therapeutic grade essential oils at doTerra.com OR just pick up a pre-made bottle from you Midwife!

If you have torn before use should definitely use the essential oil spray or use evening primrose oil (breaking the capsule open and squeeze the oil into your fingertips) at 34 weeks. Rubbing the oil directly into the scar tissue will help to break down the keloids that formed.

Women should visualize the head descending and stretching the perineum when they do their exercises. You need a strong image of birth, don't forget to include the normal baby delivery and placenta delivery with uterus clamping down.

Continue to do your pelvic floor exercises (Kegels) during the six weeks prior to the birth also so that elasticity not laxness is encouraged. After you have your baby, keep doing your Kegels, as the hormones of pregnancy subside, you will return to your old self, honest! It is the hormones that make you able to get so big and open, once they are gone, that ability is gone also.

Birth is a normal process. As a woman you were made to birth and you can do it!!