What is perineal trauma

Many women following childbirth experience perineal trauma of some description.

It is estimated that 85% of women having a vaginal birth will experience perineal trauma and of those 60-70% will need suturing.

Perineal trauma is any damage to the area between the vagina and the anus during the birth of the baby.

References


Report any signs of infection.

If you are concerned, speak to your community midwife or ring Central Delivery Suite on 01204 390932/ 390579 and book an appointment in the Wound Care Clinic with an Advanced Midwifery Practitioner.
TYPES OF TEARS

- There are numerous tears that can occur during delivery of your baby.
- A first degree tear is damage to the skin only.
- A second degree tear affects the perineal muscle and the skin.
- An episiotomy is an incision made to the perineum just before the baby is born, and will need repair in the theatre. (see separate leaflet “Third & fourth degree tears”)

HOW CAN I HELP MY TEAR HEAL?

- Maintain a balanced diet with plenty of vitamins and iron.
- Rest at regular intervals.
- Itching, numbness and a pulling sensation may be felt around the wound area, this is normal.
- Use natural laxatives such as senna if you suffer constipation.
- Commence pelvic floor exercises as soon as you are able to, this will increase pelvic floor muscle tone.
- Sexual intercourse may be recommended when the wound has fully healed or when you feel it is appropriate.
- Consider contraception.

The common complication following suturing is the risk of infection.

The following are recommended to prevent infection

- Wash hands before and after going to the toilet to prevent the spread of infection.
- Remember to keep your wound clean and dry.
- Pat dry with clean towel/do not rub.
- Shower regularly (at least once a day).
- Do not use creams or lotions.
- Wear loose cotton clothes and underwear, to avoid friction.
- Change your sanitary pads every three to four hours, when you are awake
- Use pain killers such as Paracetamol and Ibuprofen (unless you are allergic to them).
- Drink plenty of water to minimise discomfort in passing urine.
- Pouring cool water over the tear when urinating will ease discomfort.
- Do not strain when opening bowels as this will increase discomfort.

LOOK FOR SIGNS OF INFECTION

- Swelling
- Offensive (smelly) discharge
- Increase in bleeding
- Increase in pain/discomfort
- Increasing redness / heat
- Generally feeling unwell / rise in your temperature
- Gaping of wound/loose stitches or a change in appearance

It takes approximately four to six weeks for the wound to heal.