

Dr. Sandy eBook series

HOW TO AVOID AN

Episiotomy!

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BEVACQUA

Help Abolish Episiotomies!

What is an episiotomy?

It's the surgical incision made "down there" to widen the vaginal opening to make it easier for the baby to come out during childbirth.

It is often done to shorten the length of the birthing process but often causes an amazing amount of long-term pain and suffering, and can destroy a woman's sex life.

What is Perineal Massage?

This is a technique which you can learn and perform on yourself in the comfort of your own home. It is a method you can use to increase your chances of delivering your baby without an episiotomy or tearing the perineum!

Benefits of doing Perineal Massage:

When you massage the perineal tissues it helps you to identify your perineal muscles. Over time you can learn how to relax these muscles in response to the pressures of birth.

When to do Perineal Massage:

When this technique is done regularly during the last two months of pregnancy, perineal massage teaches your vaginal opening how to relax and open which causes less resistance to the baby and an easier birth experience for you.



Prenatal Perineal Massage

Regularly giving yourself perineal massage can increase your chances of delivering a baby without an episiotomy (surgical incision to widen the vaginal opening) or tearing during the birth of your baby.

Massage will teach your perineum to stretch in response to pressure, resulting in less tissue resistance to the baby.

Massage will also help you identify your perineal muscles, and helps you learn how to consciously relax them in response to pressure.

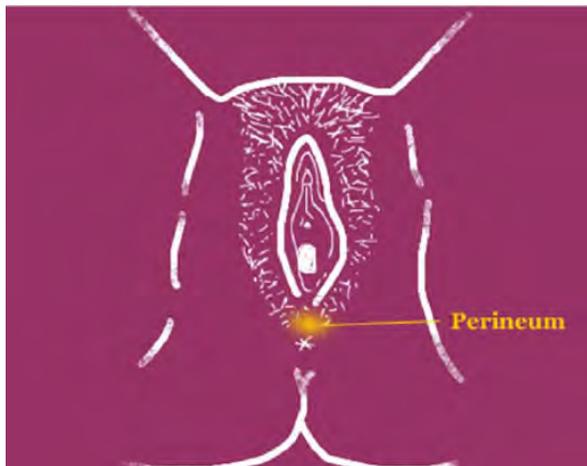


Fig 1. Location of the Perineum

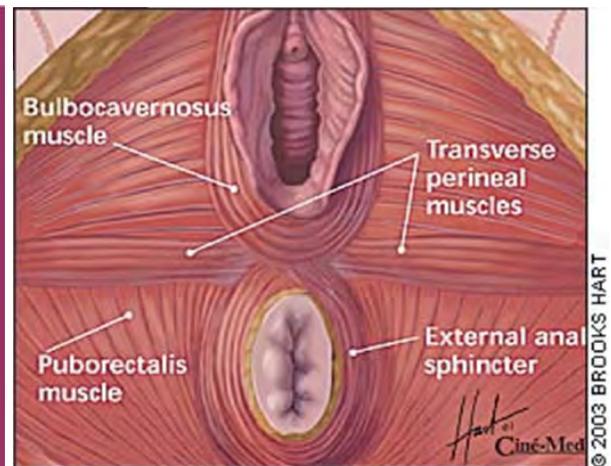


Fig 2. The Muscles of the Perineum



Instructions for Perineal Massage

For Mama:

1. Make yourself comfortable, for example lying in a semi-sitting position against some pillows may be preferable. Pour some oil onto your fingers and massage it into the perineum (Fig1-4).
2. Consciously relax your perineum. You may practice the Relaxation Breathing Exercise (Fig. 6). If you are working with a partner, guide their work with regular feedback. Be sure to let your partner know when you start to feel a burning sensation. Let your partner know right away when more lube is needed.

This massage should never be irritating or painful!!!



Instructions for Perineal Massage

For the Partner:

1. The perineum is the wall of tissue between the bottom of the vagina and the anus (Fig. 1). Put your well oiled index and middle fingers (trim nails short or wear gloves) about 2 inches into the vagina and press down toward the rectum. Use firm and steady pressure, but BE GENTLE.

Move slowly and deliberately to stretch and relax the surface tissue and the muscles below. (Fig. 2) Now slide your fingers slowly from side to side in a rhythmic “U” or sling-type motion gently stretching the tissue (Fig. 3).

2. Communication is essential for this to work! Communicate to Mama step-by-step what you are going to do before you do it. Encourage Mama to tell you what she feels.

Use enough pressure that the tissue just begins to sting, she'll tell you when. Then use slightly less pressure so the sting is barely felt or is not felt at all. This is the perfect amount of pressure.

3. The woman you are caring for is going to be extremely grateful for your care. Your mindful touch to this essential part of her body can be deeply healing for her and has the potential of creating a deep spiritual bond between the two of you.



Instructions for Perineal Massage

For Partner and Mama:

1. The baby is not coming today. Small changes to mama's perineum on a daily basis are much more effective than getting the entire job done today. Be committed to this process! Schedule 5-10 minutes everyday to get best results.
2. In the first few sessions, the tissues will be tight, but with time and regular massage, there should be a noticeable increase in the stretchiness of the muscles and to their ability to relax in response to pressure.
3. If you find a very tight muscle that is resistant (it may feel hard, lumpy or like a piano string), apply constant pressure. Either on the end of the muscle or pressure sideways at the belly of the muscle for at least 1-4 minutes. Wait for the muscle to release, relax and surrender to the pressure. Deep breathing into the muscle helps quite a bit. If it doesn't work on one attachment point, go to the other end of the muscle and try again.
4. Sometimes a muscle that doesn't relax at all one day will magically surrender and melt away the next. Be patient.

Mamas working alone:

1. It may be helpful to squat or sit on a toilet. Use one or both thumbs to massage, as this will be easier than using your fingers (Fig. 4).

Note: Do not do this massage if Mama has a yeast or other vaginal infection – it will only aggravate the problem.



Prenatal Perineal Massage Technique

Start massaging 6-8 weeks before your due date.

- Massage daily for about 5-10 minutes.
- If possible, work with a committed partner, as perineal massage can be challenging to do alone.
- You may use pure Vitamin E, sesame oil, almond oil, olive oil, coconut oil or some other natural organic lubricant such as Vital Vulva Salve, Yes or Water Slide.

Do not use mineral oil or any vegetable oil as they can strip your tissues of oil soluble vitamins – the vitamins that keep your tissues pliable.

- The oil or salve you are using may be augmented with helpful herbs: calendula, comfrey, myrrh, St. John's Wort, or tiny amounts of lavender. (All products with added herbs must be approved for use on mucus membranes.)
- Perineal massage is a gentle, compassionate practice and can be healing for both the giver and receiver. It can bring welcome intimacy to couples prior to the stresses of family expansion.
- If all goes well, the birth will be easy. Mama will have avoided an episiotomy and will quickly recover her full health and a vibrant pelvic floor.



Perineal Massage Diagrams

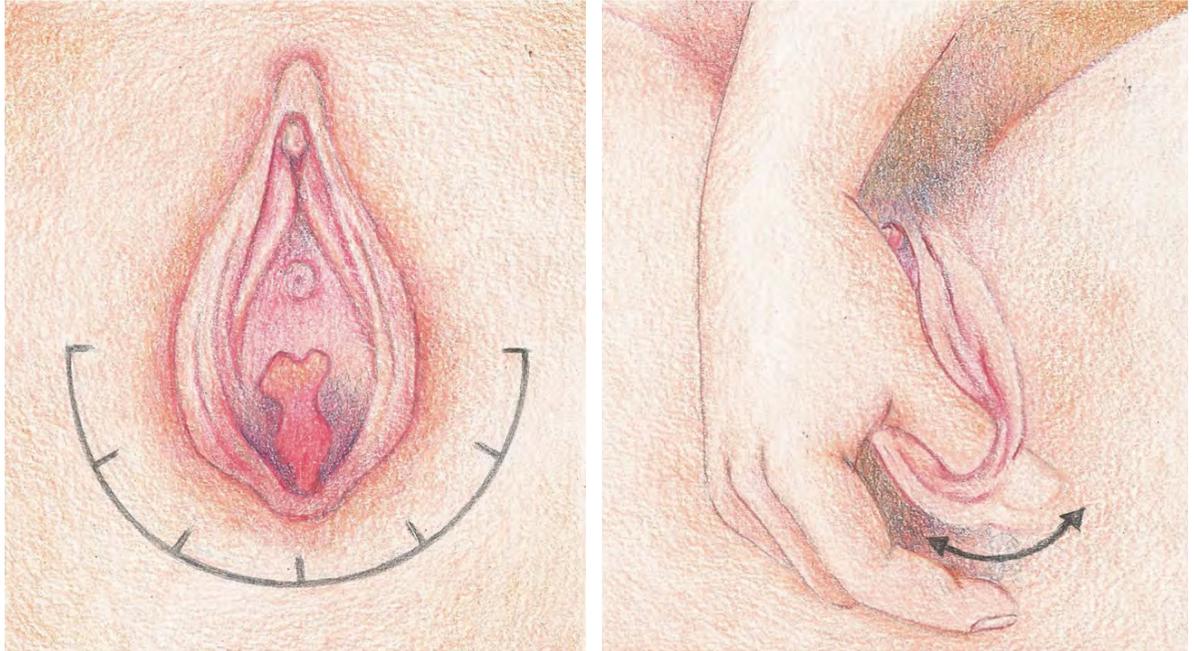
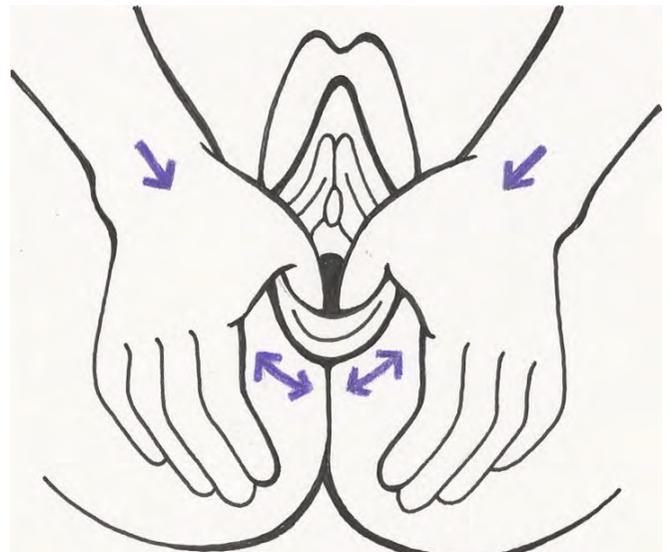


Fig 3. Perineal massage need only be done on the lower half of the vaginal opening. A mother working alone may do this massage with one or both (Fig. 4) thumbs. However, a partner will find the pointer and middle fingers much easier to use. Be sure to use plenty of lubrication. This massage should never cause pain!

Fig 4. Perineal Self-Massage with Two Thumbs



Perineal Massage leads to easier births



Fig 5. The Perineum is Designed to Stretch!



Relaxation Breathing Exercise

Diaphragmatic Breathing - Find a Rhythm

INHALE: Abdomen fills, diaphragm drops

EXHALE: Abdomen empties, diaphragm lifts

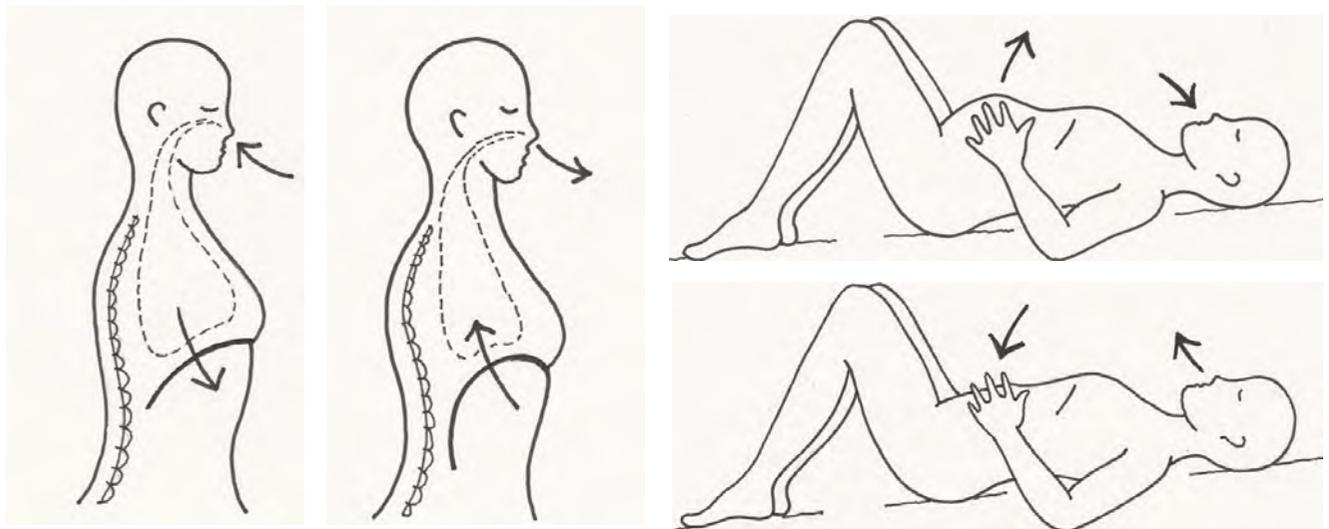


Fig 6. The respiratory diaphragm sits like a dome behind the rib cage.

During your breath in, the diaphragm pulls down like a window shade, dropping into the abdomen causing the abdomen to bulge out gently.

When you exhale, the diaphragm lifts back up into the rib cage to help expel the air.



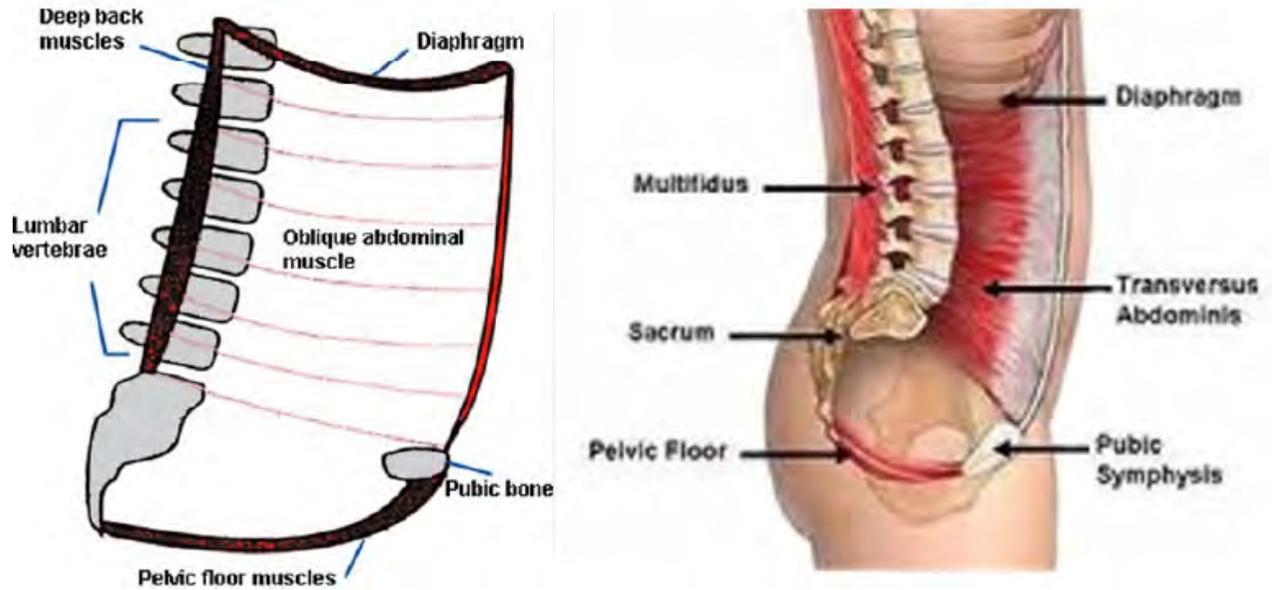


Fig 7. Diagram of the abdominal structure.

Note that the Diaphragm and the Pelvic Floor are connected by way of the abdominal muscles and the muscles along the low and mid-back. The diaphragm is above the organs and the pelvic floor is below.

The pelvic floor muscles form the bottom of the trunk, or core muscles, and are responsible for the support of all of the lower organs.

It makes sense that the pelvic floor also provides some support of the organs in the middle of the abdomen as well.



Pelvic Floor Release

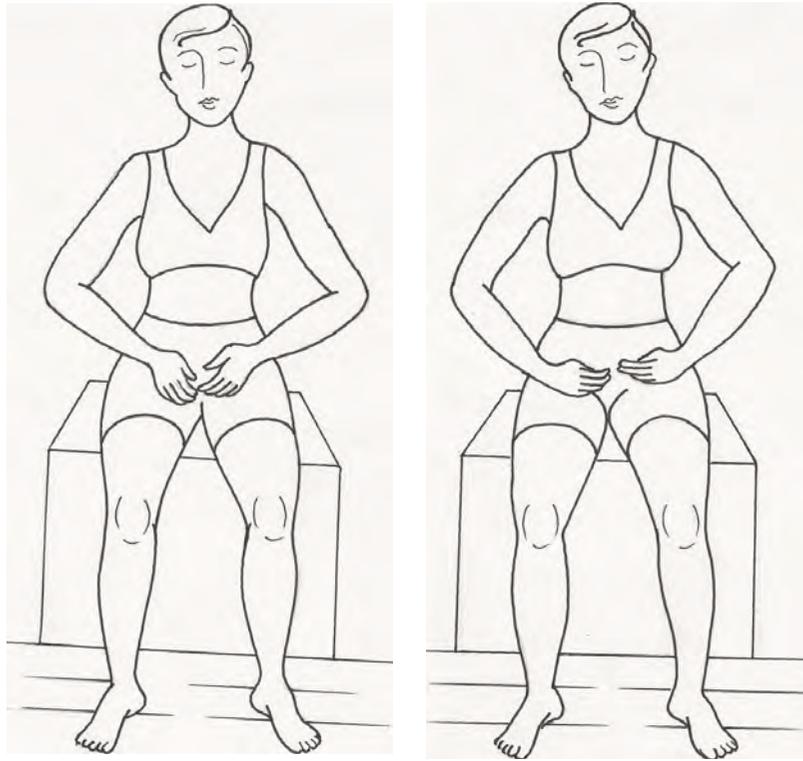


Fig 8. Breathing into the Pelvic Floor

INHALE: Pelvic floor drops - EXHALE: Pelvic floor lifts

The pelvic floor muscles move in a downward direction during inhalation making room for the downward pressure from the diaphragm on the internal abdominal organs. This causes a slight lengthening or relaxation of the pelvic floor muscles during our inhalation. (picture on left).

During exhalation (breathing out) the pelvic floor muscles lift in an upward direction, causing them to shorten slightly (picture on right).

See if you can feel this rhythm of the pelvic floor with your breathing. It will help if you visualize what the muscles look like and what they are supposed to be doing. Be sure to do the video and reading portions of your homework in order to understand your anatomy and develop your visualization skills.

Most of us are not aware of any movement in our pelvic floor muscles; however, if we can allow movement during our breathing (not force it to happen, but observe that it does), our pelvic floor muscles will be better oxygenated and less tense throughout the day.

Your ability to consciously relax and release your pelvic floor muscles (PFM) is a critical part of your recovery program. Many women have very tense 'pelvic floor' muscles for years and have been unaware of it all that time. Part or all of your pelvic floor muscles may be entirely exhausted and you don't know it!

All you may feel is a pressure, a bit of occasional pain, constant pain, the discomfort of prolapse, or you may feel nothing at all!

You must learn to relax these muscles before they can become functional again or pain-free. Also, if the muscles are not able to truly relax then it will be impossible to strengthen them.





Need More Support? We're Here to Help!

Confused about what to do?

Want more guidance on exactly what you need to do to prepare your pelvic floor for the birth of your baby and to recover afterwards?

Or maybe you don't want to try and figure this out on your own?

Check out Dr Sandy's website DrSandyBevacqua.com for more: online courses, live webinars, and products, all backed by decades of personal research and experience, to support you in **Living the Life You Deserve - Naturally!**

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