

When your perineal wound from childbirth has a problem healing

Maternity Services

Information for Patients

Produced: December 2025

Review: December 2028

Leaflet number: 1690 Version: 1

Introduction

Perineal wounds sometimes happen when you give birth. Your midwife or doctor may give you this leaflet. It will help you to be able to tell if a problem is happening with your wound healing. If you have worries about your wound, contact your midwife or maternity assessment unit. Please do that now.

What problems can happen?

Your stitches should help your wound to heal. Stitches don't normally fail. Stitches can break down if there is an infection or bleeding in the wound. If the stitches break down the wound may reopen. We call this perineal wound breakdown or perineal wound dehiscence.

What are the signs of perineal wound breakdown?

If your perineal wound is beginning to break down, you might notice:

- Your pain gets worse
- New bleeding from the wound
- Discharge that looks like pus
- An unpleasant smell coming from the wound
- Feeling unwell or having a fever
- Stitches coming loose. Stitches are meant to start dissolving after 7 days

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

What treatment can I have if my perineal wound does not heal?

Your doctor and midwife will look to see why your wound is not healing. Your midwife or doctor might take a swab to look for an infection. If an infection is present, we may offer antibiotics.

If there is an infection and your wound has opened up, it will not be re-stitched. Re-stitching could trap the infection. This will stop your wound healing. Your midwife or doctor will check that your wound is healing. They will check that the infection has cleared.

You can take pain relief. You can use paracetamol, ibuprofen, and cold compresses. You don't normally need to stay in hospital for treatment. You will be given a follow-up appointment at the perineal wound review clinic.

How do perineal wound breakdowns heal?

A wound that has broken down and reopened will heal. This is a natural process. In this process, new tissue slowly fills the space left by the stitches. Healing starts from the inside of the wound up to the skin. This new tissue is often delicate and red at first. It will normally leave a scar. After a few months, the scar will slowly shrink and fade. This may take up to 2 years.

The healing time is different for different people. This will depend on;

- Where the wound is
- the wounds depth
- how long any infection lasted
- re-stitched perineal wounds may heal more quickly. There is a risk they could become infected and break down again. Once fully healed, the wound will not reopen.

What can you do to help your wound heal?

- After using the toilet, clean your wound. Use a jug to pour body temperature water over the area. You can also use a bidet to do this.
- Clean your wound daily in the shower or with a short bath. Use only water.
- Change your maternity pad every few hours. Maternity pads are softer than regular pads. They are more absorbent. They don't have plastic backing. Plastic backing can cause a problem with wound healing.
- Always wash your hands before and after:
 - changing your maternity pad,
 - using the toilet
 - cleaning your wound.
- After cleaning, gently dry the area with a clean towel. Dry from front (vagina) to back (bottom).
- Take paracetamol and ibuprofen for pain relief. If you cannot take paracetamol or ibuprofen. Or if you need stronger medication, talk to your doctor or midwife.

- Ice-packs can help reduce swelling and pain. You can apply an ice-pack a few times a day for up to ten minutes. **Always** wrap it in a cloth . Do not put an ice pack straight on your wound
- Sitting, standing, and walking may put pressure on the wound. Pressure can cause discomfort. Take regular breaks by lying down or lying on your side to relieve pressure. You can remove your underwear and let your wound air when you do this.
- Try different positions while feeding your baby to reduce pressure on the wound.

Slow to heal wounds

Sometimes wounds can be slow to heal. The wound can be:

- red
- raised
- tender
- bleeds when you touch it

This is called hypergranulation. This is a problem with wound healing caused by:

- Infection
- Inflammation
- too much pressure or moisture

If you think you have any of the above signs, please contact your midwife or doctor. They can refer you to the perineal clinic for treatment.

To help your wound to heal it is important to:

- Keep it clean.
- Change maternity pads when dirty
- Take pressure off your wound as much as possible. Lie on your back or side.
- Air your wound to reduce moisture

Will I have follow-up in the perineal wound review clinic?

You may be worried about how your wound is healing. You can ask your midwife or doctor to refer you to the perineal wound review clinic. In this clinic the team can look at your swab results. They will let you know if you need antibiotics or further treatment.

At the clinic we will look at your wound. We will check for signs of infection. We will look for signs of normal wound healing. We may suggest medications to help the healing process. The team will see you until your wound has healed.

If you have a third or fourth degree tear, you will be given a follow-up appointment in the perineal clinic.



What happens in future births?

If you have had a wound breakdown, it does not mean it will happen again. If you are worried about future pregnancies, it's important to discuss them with your healthcare professional. Together, you can create a birth plan. This can help highlight your concerns.

Quick links to information and support

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists: Tears Hub

www.rcog.org.uk/for-the-public/perineal-tears-and-episiotomies-in-childbirth/



Pelvic Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy: Patient Information

<https://thepogp.co.uk/resources/booklets/>



MASIC: Information and support for women who have suffered an obstetric anal sphincter injury

<https://masic.org.uk>



Birth Trauma Association: Supporting parents who have experienced birth trauma

www.birthtraumaassociation.org



Contact details:

If you have urgent concerns about how your wound is healing please contact the Maternity Assessment Unit on: **0116 258 6111**

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net