Natural Therapies for Women Wellbeing

Antenatal Perineal Massage

For the last month of pregnancy

INFORMATION FOR WOMEN - BE EMPOWERED FOR A BEAUTIFUL BIRTH

BY VERONICA MASSA

About this informative booklet

Perineal massage in pregnancy is an important part of birth preparation. It helps to gradually stretch and soften the vagina and the perineum, and get ready for the delivery of your baby with increased awareness through knowledge of your body, visual imagery and confidence.

- **Are you having your first baby?**
- **Are you 30 years or older?**
- **Have you had episiotomy before?**
- **Are you planning a first vaginal birth after ceasarean?**

The evidence suggests that perineal massage is particularly beneficial for you. This booklet explains what is the perineum, why perineal massage is important and how to perform this “ritual”/technique.

Veronica Massa' s work focuses on improving women’s health and wellbeing, inspiring and helping them to feel and look happy, calm and confident. She offer one-to-one sessions and runs self-care workshops.

In a decade of practice, she has loved working with women, supporting them through the changes and challenges related to their unique pregnancy experience and encouraging them to connect with their body and their baby.

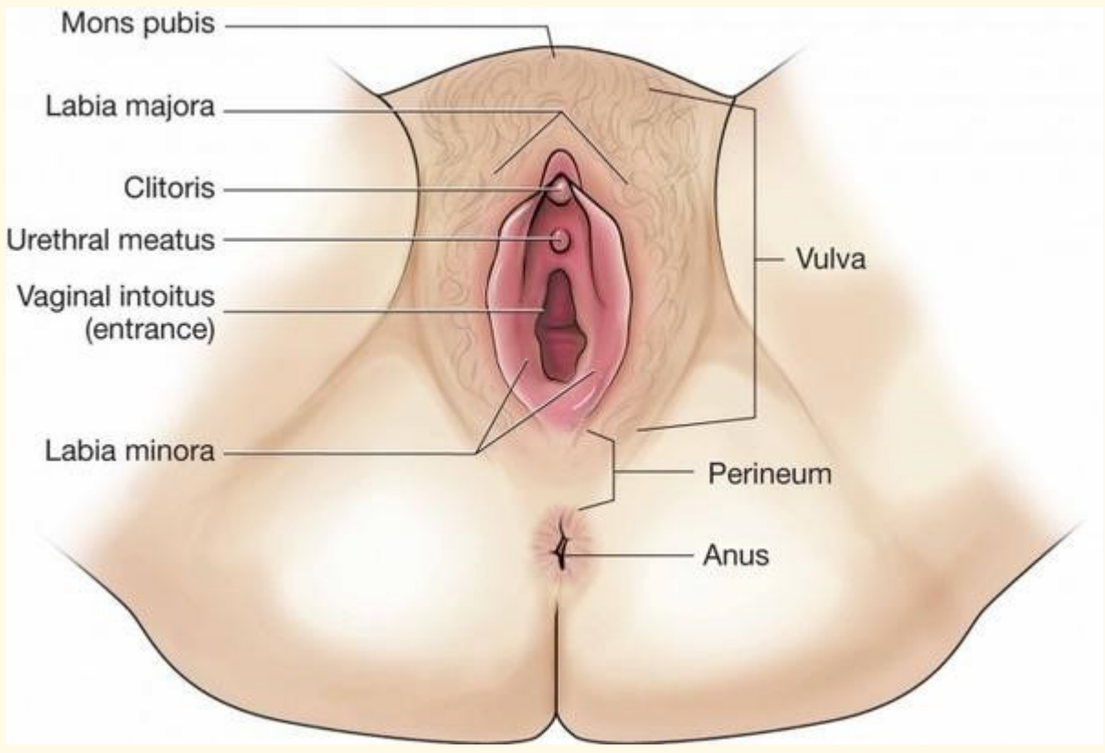
Her article "Aromatherapy in Pregnancy, are essential oils safe?" explains how Aromatherapy can be a valuable tool to accompany you in the journey of conception, throughout pregnancy, in childbirth and beyond.
Focusing on stress management, emotional tension release and natural skincare coaching, Veronica is also a Baby Massage Instructor and a mother of two.

Our body's intelligence and our innate knowing

Perineum: what is it and why massage is good?

Massage of the perineum, done the last month of pregnancy, helps to prepare this area for the stretching needed for the birth of your baby. During birth, the perineum naturally stretches to allow space for your baby's head and body to be born. Our vagina and the area around it, is extremely "elastic" with a remarkable ability to open wider than we can imagine. With that awareness, we prepare our mind and body for an event that our body is designed to perform, so trusting our body intelligence is crucial. This will facilitate a much more pleasant experience, easier delivery of your baby and a decreased eventuality of tears or need for episiotomy. Perineal massage has also been shown to reduce perineal pain after birth.

Perineum area



The perineum is the area involving skin and muscle between the vagina and the anus.

Know your body.
Touching and feeling for deeper connection

We can avoid perineal tear and unnecessary episiotomy

Sometimes, for various reasons, the natural stretching of the perineum can result in perineal tears. Other times, when the baby needs to be born quickly or the mother needs assistance, a small cut called episiotomy is made in this area.
Several studies have shown that perineal massage from 34 weeks of pregnancy reduces the incidence of perineal tears that require stitches and also the likelihood of the need for episiotomy.

A study published in 2006 by the Journal of Maternal Fetal Neonatal Medicine, by the University College Dublin School of Medicine, showed that perineal massage didn't help keep women's perineum intact at birth. Though it did say those women had better recoveries with pain and sexual circumstances after birth.

A study published in 2012 by the Archives of Gynological Obstetrics, by the Nursing and Midwifery School, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, did show a positive result for mothers undergoing the practice, especially during labor.

How?

Being comfortable with feeling and touching your body is a great advantage for labour as this can help you to deeply connect with your body, with yourself and with your baby at the moment of birth through feeling your vagina opening and your baby's head emerging.

Useful tips

• Use your hands to feel the baby's head when it begins to crown and to ease the tissues or even massage them with a little oil. Interestingly, mothers who use their own hands to help the baby out rarely tear! Keeping the area lubricated facilitates the exit of the baby.
• Don't rush or push forcefully, let your womb be your guide and follow your own urges to deliver your baby. Doing this will allow your perineum to slowly and gradually soften, relax and fan out. Push only when the urge comes and when the baby's head is about to come out, you slow down your pushing as much as possible.
• Use upright squatting or kneeling positions to give birth.
• Feel free to make sounds, releasing your throat will release your perineum. Keep your sounds in the lowest register possible, so that it vibrates the lower part of your body.
• Apply hot compresses to the perineal area if the tissues seem very tight. This can be very beneficial.
• Giving birth in a darkened room with as few people as possible, is much easier to be in the zone, relax and let go and therefore avoid a tear.
• During pregnancy practice yoga or pilates and pelvic floor exercises regularly.
• In the last six weeks massage the perineum and the whole vaginal area with a suitable oil. These are traditional practices in many cultures.

Perineal Massage

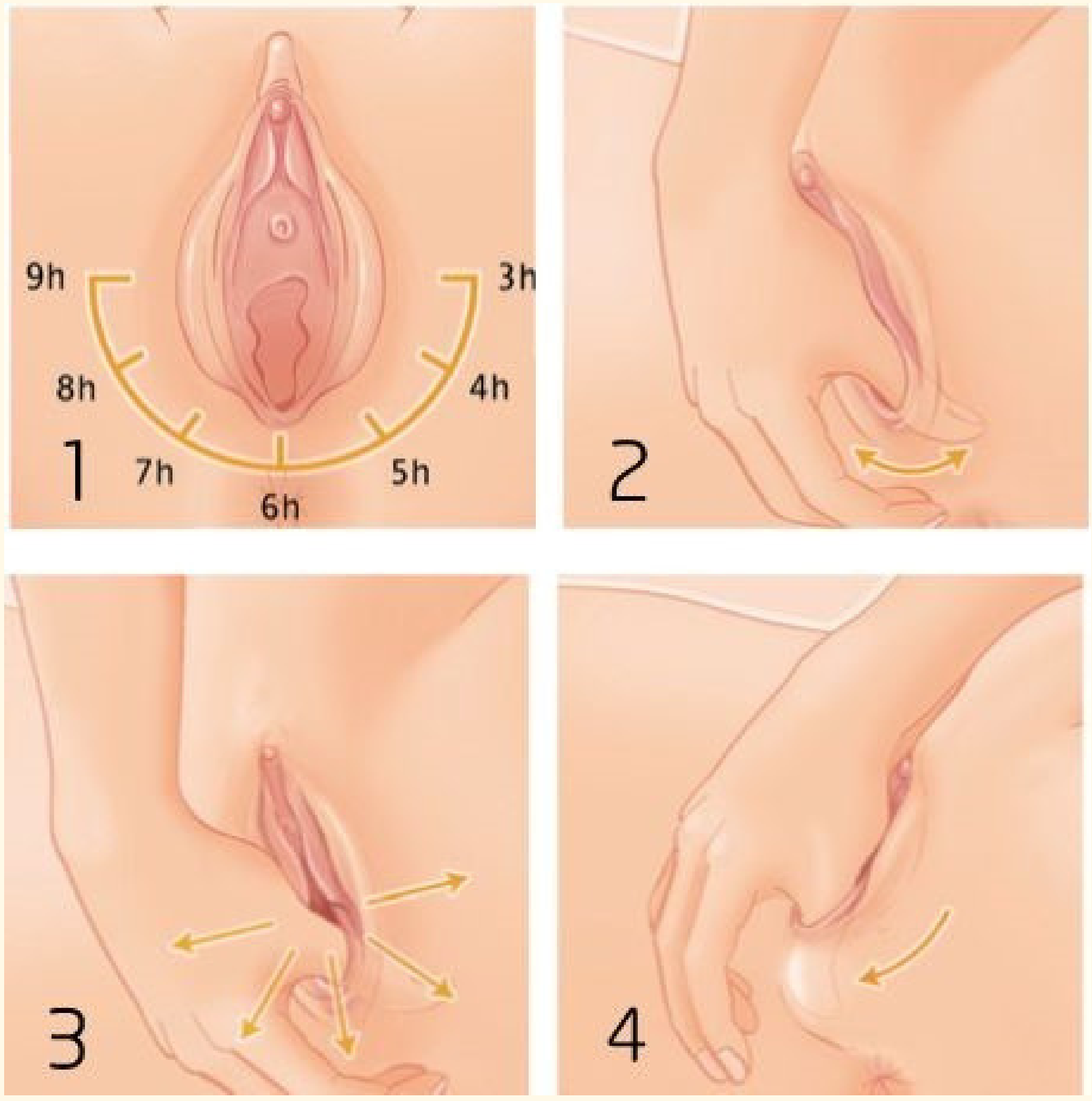
How to practice the perineal massage

Get comfortable and relaxed in a place where you feel safe, secure and will not be interrupted. Do not rush, be calm and take your time, this is the time for you to visualize the birth of your baby, be fully present.

You might find it easier to use a mirror the first few times to help you see what you are doing.

- Place one or both thumbs on and just within the back wall of your vagina, resting one or both forefingers on your buttocks.
- Pressing down a little towards your rectum (back passage) , gently massage by moving your thumb (s) together in a rhythmic 'U' shaped movement. You are aiming to massage the area inside your vagina, rather than the skin on the outside.
- Perineal massage should be comfortable but you will also feel a stretching feeling. This is similar to how your perineum will open up as you give birth to your baby.
-Focus on relaxing your perineum as much as possible during the massage.
- Aim for around 5 minutes at a time, but the massage can last as long as you wish.
- With time and practice, as your perineum becomes more elastic, you will increase your ability to relax and can increase the pressure towards your rectum. Being able to relax through this feeling of increased pressure will help you to relax as you feel the pressure in labour and your baby's head is about to be born.
- Repeat as often as you wish. For the most benefit, aim for a massage everyday.

The Massage



Performing the perineal massage

Use an organic cold pressed vegetable oil or specifically formulated Perineal massage blends. I have designed one that includes specific oils that maintain and increase tissue elasticity, including vitamin E and Rosehip oil...

You can do this alone or with your partner.

Practice every day from 34 weeks of pregnancy starting with few minutes, increase to 5 and then 10.

Relax and visualize....

Why is it worth trying it?

Here are some of the benefits

Perineal massage helps you to know your body and prepare you for the feeling of pressure and stretching that you may experience as your baby's head is being born.

It will help you to relax and take active part in the birth of your child with increased body awareness.

It can help easing pain during crowning: can ease the "ring of fire" so often experienced while baby's head is emerging.

It helps to gradually soften and stretch the perineum, ready for birth.

It can promote closeness between you and your partner.