

Self-Care After Episiotomy



You had an episiotomy or a tissue tear during your baby's birth. An episiotomy is a cut (incision) made to make the opening of the vagina larger. A tear happens on its own. The healthcare provider used stitches to repair the skin in or near your vagina. The stitches will dissolve on their own in a few weeks. They don't need to be removed by your healthcare provider.

Preventing infection

Lower the risk of infection by keeping your stitches clean. To do this:

- Gently wipe from front to back after you have a bowel movement.
- After wiping, spray warm water on the stitches. Pat dry.
- After peeing, it's OK not to wipe. Just spray with warm water and then pat dry.
- Don't use soap or any fluid except water unless your healthcare provider advises it.
- Change your sanitary pads at least every 2 to 4 hours.

Preventing constipation

Follow these suggestions:

- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and bran cereals.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water every day, unless told otherwise.
- Don't strain to have a bowel movement.
- Ask your healthcare provider if you should use a stool softener.
- If you are breastfeeding, ask your provider before you take any medicine.

Easing pain

Try to make yourself more comfortable by:

- Sitting in a warm, shallow water bath (sitz bath).
- Placing cold packs or heat packs on your stitches. Keep a thin towel between the pack and your skin.
- Sitting on a firm seat so that the stitches pull less.
- Using medicated spray as ordered by your healthcare provider.
- Talking with your provider about using an anti-inflammatory medicine such as ibuprofen to ease the pain.

Follow-up care

Make a follow-up appointment as directed.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Blood clots the size of a quarter or larger that keep coming from your vagina
- Heavy or gushing bleeding from your vagina
- Smelly fluid from your vagina
- Severe pain in the stomach or worse pain near your stitches
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Shaking chills
- No bowel movement within 1 week after the birth of your baby
- Trouble peeing
- Pain or urgency when you pee
- Stitches that come out or pieces of stitches passing from your vagina

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