

Episiotomies

An episiotomy is a surgical cut, which is made just before delivery, to make the vaginal opening larger. As the baby is being born, the tissue and muscles in and near the mother's birth canal are often stretch, bruise, and tear. These tears may extend many different ways at once and even go down into the rectum. Tears usually have ragged edges which are very difficult to sew back together. An episiotomy is a straight cut and is easily sewn back together. Having an episiotomy is thought not only to prevent ragged-edged tears, but also is thought to prevent problems for the woman in later life.

A doctor will make the decision whether to perform the episiotomy at the time of delivery. Doctors nearly always perform episiotomies on mothers delivering for the first or second time, since the tissue tends to be rather tight and tears easily. Your doctor may perform an episiotomy for other reasons, such as the size of the baby, its position, and how your labor is moving along.

An episiotomy is usually done under some type of anaesthesia. With some anaesthesia, you may still feel pressure from the baby. But you usually do not feel pain when the episiotomy cut is made. Several stitches, that do not need to be removed, are used to repair the cut. Occasionally an episiotomy may become infected, and antibiotics, pain medication, and sometimes removal of some of the stitches may be necessary. However, episiotomy infections are rare. Call your doctor if you are experiencing fever, having extreme pain, or notice foul-smelling yellowish-white drainage from the area around the stitches.

This incision may be tender and uncomfortable for the first few days after delivery, but usually heals quickly and without any problems. To decrease this discomfort, placing ice packs to the painful area of sitting in a tub of warm water several times a day may be helpful. Sprays that numb the skin are available. Bowel movements may be painful due to the incision. and you should therefore try keep your bowel movements soft. You can soften your stool by drinking lots of fluids, eating bulky foods such as raw fruits, raw vegetables, and bran cereal.