

Post-Natal Medium Term Advice & Guidance

Stitches

Some women can feel their stitches until 3 months P/N (sometimes longer). This can lengthen their recovery time and they may need to be on laxatives and pain killers for longer. If this is the case then please continue with all of the advice listed above. It is important that you go at your own pace with your recovery, not comparing yourself to others.

If you are worried, then please talk to your GP. You will also be offered a hospital appointment (when you are between 6 weeks and 6 months post-natal). At this appointment, the doctor will examine you and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions about your recovery.

General Recovery

You may be doing most of your normal household tasks by now and thinking of returning to exercise. Start with gentle walking, building up the time and distance. Avoid strenuous activity, heavy lifting, and standing for long periods of time until you are fully recovered. Let pain and discomfort be your guide as to how quickly you are able to return to a normal level of activity.

Sex

There is no right or wrong answer as to when women can return to sex. Resume intercourse when it feels right for you. Generally, however, it is advisable to wait until your stitches have healed and you have finished bleeding. Initially, things may be a little uncomfortable. You may prefer to try non-penetrative activities first, building up to full penetration over time. Using a lubricant is often needed and women who are breastfeeding may need to continue with a lubricant for longer.

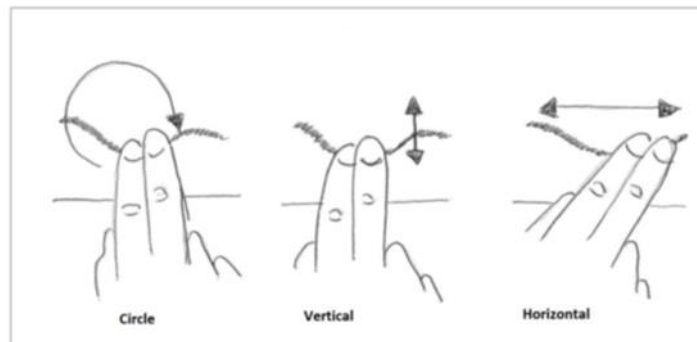
Once sex is resumed, some women may continue to experience discomfort. This is often just on initial penetration, and settles during intercourse. If pain continues during intercourse, then perineal massage might be helpful.

Perineal Massage

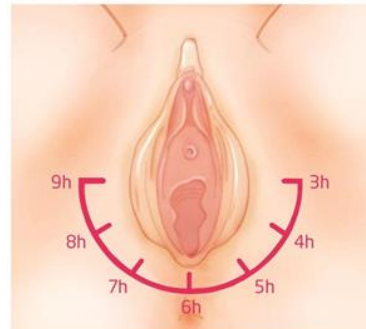
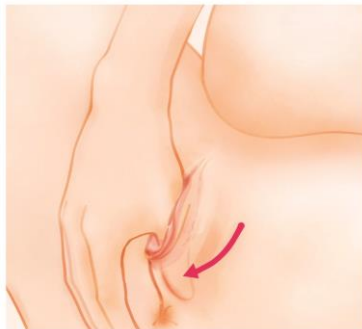
Perineal massage is a technique you can use yourself to soften any residual scar tissue and bring about normal elasticity of the tissues. Ensure you are at least 6 weeks post-natal before starting this massage and do not start it if you have a vaginal infection as this could make it worse. Aim to massage the scar tissue for 5-10 minutes a day.

Before starting the massage, have a warm bath or shower to clean the area. The warm water also aids relaxation, increasing blood flow. Get yourself into a comfortable position, lying or semi sitting, using pillows if this helps. Apply oil (e.g. almond, coconut or olive oil) or lubrication for comfort.

Start externally. Place your thumb or fingers over the scar and start to massage. Start with circles over the scar, then massage up and down over the scar, then in line with the scar. Work over the entire area. Be firm but not aggressive, you should feel a stretching sensation but it should not be overly painful. Try to relax your breathing as this will help the tissues soften and lengthen. If you find you cannot relax then you might be pushing too hard. Lighten your pressure until you feel more comfortable.



Next, massage the internal stitches. Insert your thumb into the entrance of your vagina so the pad of your thumb is facing down towards the anus. Place your index finger over your perineum; you should be able to feel the scar between your two fingers. Focus on massaging the area inside your vagina, rather than the skin on the outside. Apply pressure with your thumb. Hold that pressure for approximately 1 minute.



Once you are able to hold the pressure for 1 minute then make firm “U” shapes (going from 3 to 9 as if imagining a clock) over the scar area. This might feel a little bit tender to start with. Try to relax your breathing and work at a level that feels right for you.

You will need to continue with perineal massage for several weeks to see any benefit. If you find that pain is decreasing, then continue with the massage. But, if pain doesn't settle then please discuss this with your GP.