

Obstetric Perineal Lacerations

First-Degree Laceration

What is a first-degree laceration?

A first-degree laceration is the smallest tear a woman can have after delivering a baby. These tears involve injury to the first layer of tissue in the vagina or on the perineum (the area between the vagina and the anus) and occur when the vagina and surrounding tissues stretch during delivery. A first-degree laceration is common and usually heals well. Most women report improvement in pain after about 2 weeks.

How do I take care of my stitches and bottom?

First-degree lacerations are so small that they often do not require any stitches. If you do have stitches, they are located in the vagina or on the perineum to close this tear. These stitches should dissolve on their own within 6 weeks. You may want to use a small squirt bottle (a “peri-bottle”) of water when you urinate or have a bowel movement to keep the area clean until the tear and stitches are healed. Ice packs, as well as medicated pads and sprays for discomfort can also be helpful; please use them according to package instructions. It is also important to stay hydrated and to take stool softeners if needed to keep your bowels soft while your bottom is healing. Some common stool softeners available at pharmacies are docusate, milk of magnesia, and polyethylene glycol (MiraLax®). Resting your bottom in a warm bath of water for 10 minutes at a time (a “Sitz bath”) can also help.

