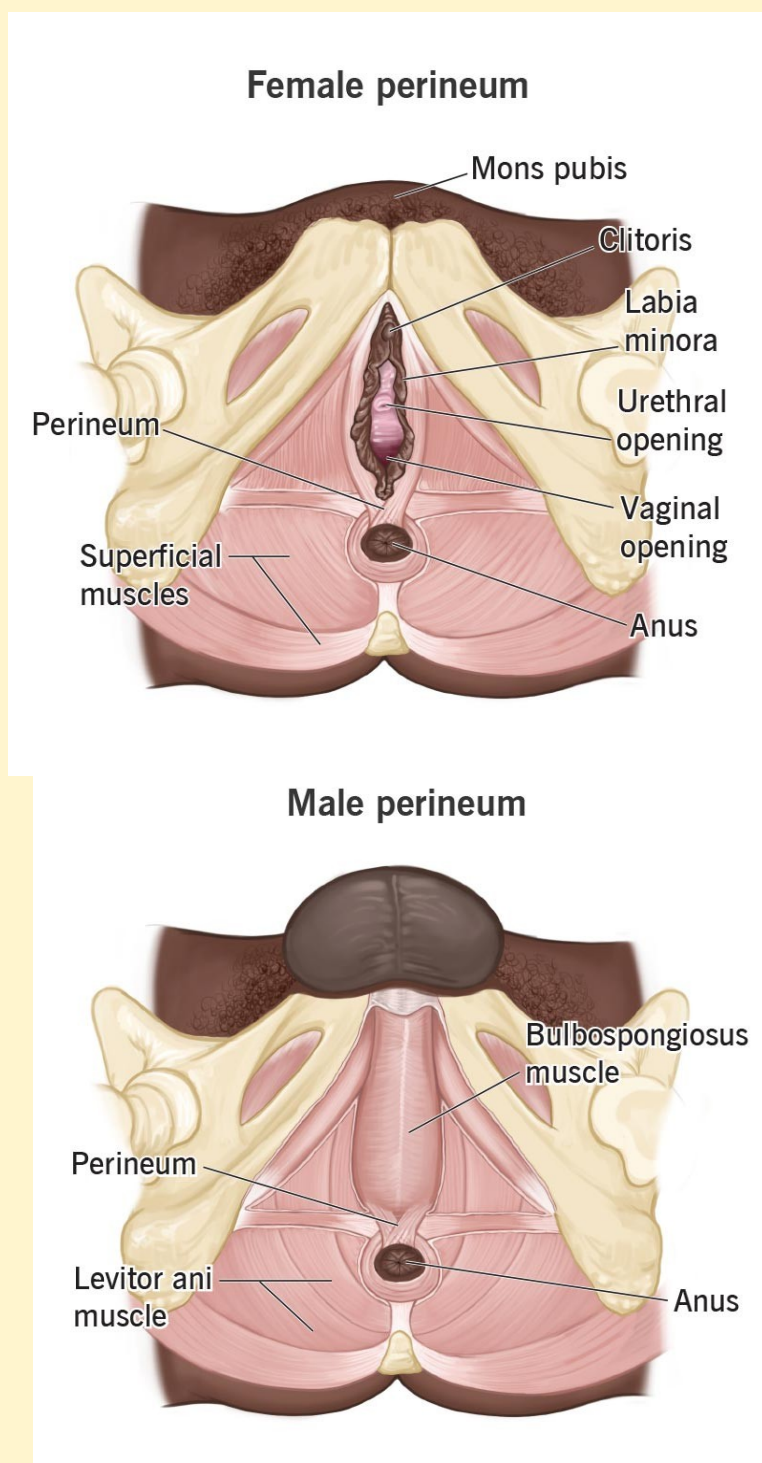


Your perineum is the **thin layer of muscles** between your genitals (vaginal opening or scrotum) and anus. Inside your body, your perineum consists of **tissue** that makes up the bottom of your pelvic cavity. It's a common site for tears during childbirth. Minor tears may heal on their own, while major ones may require stitches.

Your perineum is the tiny patch of sensitive thin-layer muscles between your genitals (vaginal opening or scrotum) and [anus](#), and it's also the **bottom region of your pelvic cavity**. The perineum may refer to just the part of your body you can see (the skin in between your genitals and your anus). However, the Perineum may also refer to the underlying structures inside your body beneath your [pelvic floor](#):



The perineum is a tough mass of fibromuscular tissue called the *perineal body* and is located where your *urogenital and anal triangles meet*. **It plays a significant role in supporting your pelvic floor and injures easily during childbirth.**

The average perineum is about 1.5 inches (in) long if you're AFAB (cisgender women, transgender men and nonbinary people with vaginas). It's about 2 inches or more if you're assigned male at birth, or AMAB (cisgender men, transgender women and nonbinary people with penises).

Underneath your perineum's skin are multiple layers of *connective tissue, fatty tissue, muscles and membranes*. An **important nerve** called the [pudendal nerve](#) runs through your perineum and branches out into various parts of your anatomy, including your genitals, pelvic floor muscles and anus. This complex nerve network makes your perineum sensitive to sexual sensations and helps you urinate and defecate. During biofeedback, a healthcare provider inserts a probe into your vagina. Your provider asks you to perform a Kegel. A monitor shows if you're squeezing the correct muscles.

Your perineum is also an erogenous zone. The **skin covering your perineum contains multiple nerve endings that help with sexual arousal and response.**

Inside your body, your perineum contains structures that help you pee, poop and have intercourse. If you're a woman or assigned female at birth (AFAB), your perineum contains structures that help you give birth vaginally. Your perineum forms a foundation that helps support your pelvic floor muscles, which hold organs like your bladder, colon and reproductive organs in place.

Your perineum lies between your genitals and your anus. This part of your perineum that you can see corresponds with structures inside your body that you can't see. Internally, your perineum is *located below the primary muscle of your pelvic floor (levator ani)*, and it stretches across your pelvic bones.

- **Pubic symphysis joint (front):** Your perineum begins at your [pubic symphysis](#), the joint in the front of your pelvis that connects your left and right pelvic bones.
- **Tailbone (back):** Your perineum reaches from your pubic symphysis joint back to your tailbone (coccyx).
- **Sitz bones (sides):** Your perineum extends onto your sitz bones (or ischial tuberosities) on the right and left sides of your pelvis.

Diagrams sometimes show the perineum's boundaries as diamond-shaped, with an imaginary line drawn from one sitz bone in your pelvis to the other. This imaginary line divides the diamond into two triangle-shaped regions: the urogenital triangle and the anal triangle.

- **Urogenital triangle:** Contains the genitals, the urethra (the tube that moves pee outside your body) and the associated muscles.

- **Anal triangle:** Contains the opening of the anus and your anal sphincter (the muscle that helps your anus squeeze and relax so that you can poop).

A tough mass of fibromuscular tissue called the perineal body is located where your urogenital and anal triangles meet. It plays a significant role in supporting your pelvic floor and injures easily during childbirth.

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Pain is the most common sign that something's wrong with your perineum. After childbirth, you may experience pain from a torn perineum that makes it difficult to walk or sit.

Other symptoms may signal an issue with your perineum or a condition affecting the surrounding muscles or organs in your pelvic cavity, including:

- Trouble peeing or pooping.
- Sore or itchy perineum.
- Difficulty getting an [erection](#).
- Pain when you pee or have intercourse.
- A lump on your perineum, redness and swelling.

Your provider can check for an injury, infection or other condition that's affecting your perineum by doing a physical exam. The exam may include a [digital rectal exam](#), where your provider places a gloved finger into your rectum to feel for any irregularities.

Imaging procedures can help your provider diagnose problems affecting your perineum:

- **CT Scan:** Can show if there's been an internal injury to your perineum.
- **MRI:** Can show if there's been damage to the blood vessels or muscles in your perineum.
- **Ultrasound:** Can show damaged blood vessels in your perineum.
- **X-Ray with dye:** Can show any damage to your urethra (the tube that carries pee out of your body). Your urethra passes through tissue in your perineum.

What are common treatments for the perineum?

Your provider can assess any cuts or tears on your perineum to determine whether you need stitches to repair your injury. In the meantime, pain management strategies can ease your symptoms as you heal.

- **Sitz bath and warm compresses:** A [sitz bath](#) is a shallow, warm-water bath that cleans your perineum and aids in healing. You should use a sitz bath twice a day for at least five to ten minutes. Pat your perineum dry after leaving the bath instead of scrubbing.
- **Pain medications and numbing sprays:** Taking acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®) and using pain-numbing sprays can ease the pain while your body heals. Hemorrhoid wipes and creams can help with pain, itching or burning in your perineum, too.
- **Peri-bottle:** A peri-bottle is a small container that you can fill with warm water and use to spray your perineum after going to the bathroom. It cleans you gently so that you don't have to wipe with toilet paper.
- **Constipation prevention:** Straining through bowel movements may worsen perineum pain. Eating a [high-fiber diet](#) and drinking at least eight cups of water a day can help prevent constipation.
- **Pelvic floor exercises (Kegel exercises) **:** Strengthening your pelvic floor muscles after childbirth can help your body heal and rebuild after experiencing tears. Your healthcare provider may refer you to a physical therapist for specialized pelvic floor exercises. Only attempt Kegels following an injury with your provider's guidance.

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Kegel exercises (also called pelvic floor exercises) help strengthen your [pelvic floor muscles](#). Your pelvic floor muscles support organs in your pelvis, like your bladder, bowel and vagina. Your pelvic floor muscles hold your organs in place while also assisting with bodily functions like peeing, pooping and sex. Kegels involve tightening and then releasing the muscles in your pelvic floor to strengthen them.

Kegel exercises help keep your pelvic floor muscles "fit." Much like you may strengthen other muscles in your body by lifting weights, doing Kegels is a way to keep your pelvic floor muscles strong. Kegel exercises can give you better control over your bladder and bowels and prevent your pelvic muscles from getting weak.

Weak pelvic floor muscles can cause you to leak pee and poop, or accidentally pass gas. Your pelvic floor muscles can weaken with age or due to things like pregnancy, childbirth or surgery.

Anything that puts stress on the muscles of your pelvic floor can cause them to weaken and be less supportive to your pelvic organs. Certain health conditions or life events can make your pelvic floor muscles weak. Some of these conditions and events include:

Pregnancy.

- Childbirth, including a [C-section](#).
- Having [obesity](#) (a [body mass index](#), or BMI, greater than 30) or overweight (a BMI greater than 25).
- Surgery in your pelvic area.
- Aging. The muscles of your pelvic floor, as well as muscles in your rectum and anus, naturally weaken with age.
- Excessive straining while pooping ([constipation](#)) or chronic coughing.
- Exercises (especially jumping, running and lifting heavy weights)

To find your pelvic floor muscles, try stopping the flow of your pee when you're sitting on the toilet. Only do this until you learn how it feels (otherwise this stopping and starting can lead to infection). You can also imagine you're trying to prevent yourself from passing gas.

You can also insert a finger into your vagina and squeeze the muscles in your vagina around it. You should feel pressure around your finger. The muscles you feel 'lifting' inside of you when you're trying these activities are the same ones you strengthen during Kegel exercises.

You perform Kegel exercises by lifting and holding and then relaxing your pelvic floor muscles. Start by doing a few Kegels at a time, then gradually increase both the length of time and the number of Kegels you're doing in each 'session' (or set). You should perform at least two to three sets of these exercises per day.

Steps for Doing Kegels.

First, locate your pelvic floor muscles.

Start by tightening your pelvic floor muscles for 3 seconds, then relaxing for 3 seconds. This is one Kegel.

Try to repeat this 10 times. This is called a set.

Do one set in the morning and one set at night.

As you gain strength, try increasing these numbers ... for example, hold and relax for 5 seconds each.

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Doing Kegels shouldn't hurt. If your stomach, lower back or head hurt after doing Kegels, you're probably holding your breath or clenching the wrong muscles.

If you're having trouble finding your pelvic floor muscles or experience pain and discomfort, you may be doing Kegels wrong. It might be helpful to contact a healthcare provider for help.

If you're doing Kegels correctly, you should notice your symptoms improve gradually over several weeks. For example, you may find you don't leak pee as often

You need to tighten or squeeze your limbs (legs) enough to feel Kegels working. However, be careful not to bear *over down on or squeeze the muscles of your inner thighs, back, buttocks or stomach*. *Over squeezing* these muscles means you aren't doing the exercise correctly.

You also shouldn't squeeze so hard that you hold your breath. Continue to breathe normally through Kegels. It may help to count out loud to maintain your usual breathing pattern.

When starting out, only do the number of Kegel exercises that are fairly easy for you to do. For example, five Kegels that you hold for three seconds each twice a day. Slowly increase these numbers as you gain strength and endurance. Ideally, you'll work up to holding your Kegels for five seconds, then relaxing your muscles for five seconds. Repeat this up to 10 times, at least two or three times per day.

You can perform Kegels sitting, standing or lying down. Choose what feels the most comfortable to you. In all positions, you should focus on squeezing and lifting — like you're picking something up with your pelvic floor.

If you have trouble doing Kegel exercises, a provider might suggest trying biofeedback training and electric stimulation of your pelvic floor muscles.

Electrical stimulation recreates the sensation of what a Kegel exercise should feel like. During electrical stimulation, your provider sends a small electric current into your pelvic floor muscles. In turn, your muscles react to the current by squeezing.

Don't be afraid to contact a healthcare provider if you're struggling to perform Kegels or are unsure if you're using the right muscles. They are there to help you.....