

Comparison 1: Perineal massage compared with control (“hands off” or usual care)

Source: Aasheim V, Nilsen A, Reinar L, Lukasse M. Perineal techniques during the second stage of labour for reducing perineal trauma. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2017;(6):CD006672.

No. of studies	Study design	Quality assessment					No. of participants		Effect		Certainty (GRADE)	Importance
		Risk of bias	Inconsistency	Indirectness	Imprecision	Other considerations	Perineal massage	Control (hands off or care as usual)	Relative (95% CI)	Absolute (95% CI)		
Intact perineum												
6	RCTs	serious ^a	serious ^b	not serious	not serious	none	382/1347 (28.4%)	289/1271 (22.7%)	RR 1.74 (1.11-2.73)	168 more per 1000 (from 25 more to 393 more)	⊕⊕○○ LOW	critical
Third- or fourth-degree tears												
5	RCTs	not serious	not serious	not serious	not serious	none	17/1276 (1.3%)	35/1201 (2.9%)	RR 0.49 (0.25-0.94)	15 fewer per 1000 (from 2 fewer to 22 fewer)	⊕⊕⊕⊕ HIGH	critical
Perineal trauma needing suturing												
1	RCT	serious ^a	not serious	not serious	very serious ^{c,d}	none	23/38 (60.5%)	21/38 (55.3%)	RR 1.10 (0.75-1.61)	55 more per 1000 (from 138 fewer to 337 more)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	critical
First-degree perineal tear												
5	RCTs	very serious ^e	serious ^b	not serious	serious ^c	none	114/269 (42.4%)	77/268 (28.7%)	RR 1.55 (0.79-3.05)	158 more per 1000 (from 60 fewer to 589 more)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	critical
Second-degree perineal tear												
5	RCTs	very serious ^e	serious ^b	not serious	serious ^c	none	50/269 (18.6%)	57/268 (21.3%)	RR 1.08 (0.55-2.12)	17 more per 1000 (from 96 fewer to 238 more)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	critical
Episiotomy												
7	RCTs	very serious ^e	serious ^b	not serious	serious ^c	none	235/1380 (17.0%)	325/1304 (24.9%)	RR 0.55 (0.29-1.03)	112 fewer per 1000 (from 7 more to 177 fewer)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	critical

CI: confidence interval; RCT: randomized controlled trial; RR: risk ratio.

^a Most of the pooled effect derived from studies with a moderate or high risk of bias but without a substantial proportion (i.e. with < 50%) from studies with a high risk of bias.

^b Severe unexplained heterogeneity.

^c Wide confidence interval crossing the line of no effect.

^d Small sample size and/or few events.

^e Most of the pooled effect derived from studies with a moderate or high risk of bias but with a substantial proportion (i.e. > 50%) from studies with a high risk of bias.