

Comparison: Policy of selective/restrictive compared with routine or liberal use of episiotomy

Source: Jiang H, Qian X, Carroli G, Garner P. Selective versus routine use of episiotomy for vaginal birth. Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2017;(2):CD000081.

No. of studies	Study design	Quality assessment					Other considerations	No. of participants		Effect		Certainty (GRADE)	Importance
		Risk of bias	Inconsistency	Indirectness	Imprecision			Selective episiotomy	Routine episiotomy	Relative (95% CI)	Absolute (95% CI)		
Severe perineal/vaginal trauma													
11	RCTs	serious ^a	not serious	not serious	not serious	publication bias strongly suspected ^b	67/3091 (2.2%)	97/3086 (3.1%)	RR 0.70 (0.52-0.94)	9 fewer per 1000 (from 2 fewer to 15 fewer)	⊕⊕○○ LOW	critical	
Severe perineal/vaginal trauma (grouped by trial implementation success) - difference in episiotomy rate < 30%													
3	RCTs	not serious	not serious	not serious	serious	none	30/649 (4.6%)	29/651 (4.5%)	RR 1.03 (0.63-1.69)	1 more per 1000 (from 16 fewer to 31 more)	⊕⊕⊕○ MODERATE	critical	
Severe perineal/vaginal trauma (grouped by trial implementation success) - difference in episiotomy rate ≥ 30%													
8	RCTs	serious ^a	not serious	not serious	not serious	none	37/2442 (1.5%)	68/2435 (2.8%)	RR 0.55 (0.38-0.81)	13 fewer per 1000 (from 5 fewer to 17 fewer)	⊕⊕⊕○ MODERATE	critical	
Severe perineal/vaginal trauma - primiparae													
11	RCTs	serious ^a	not serious	not serious	not serious	publication bias strongly suspected ^b	57/2054 (2.8%)	87/2083 (4.2%)	RR 0.68 (0.50-0.93)	13 fewer per 1000 (from 3 fewer to 21 fewer)	⊕⊕○○ LOW	critical	
Severe perineal/vaginal trauma - multiparae													
4	RCTs	serious ^a	not serious	not serious	very serious ^c	none	8/1037 (0.8%)	9/1003 (0.9%)	RR 0.83 (0.35-2.01)	2 fewer per 1000 (from 6 fewer to 9 more)	⊕⊕○○ LOW	critical	
Blood loss at delivery (mL)													
2	RCTs	not serious	serious ^e	not serious	very serious ^d	none	183	153	-	MD 27.16 lower (74.8 lower to 20.49 higher)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	critical	
Perineal infection													
3	RCTs	serious ^a	not serious	not serious	serious ^d	none	15/730 (2.1%)	16/737 (2.2%)	RR 0.90 (0.45-1.82)	2 fewer per 1000 (from 12 fewer to 18 more)	⊕⊕○○ LOW	critical	
Dyspareunia long-term (≥ 6 months)													
3	RCTs	serious ^a	not serious	not serious	serious ^d	none	78/543 (14.4%)	73/564 (12.9%)	RR 1.14 (0.84-1.53)	18 more per 1000 (from 21 fewer to 69 more)	⊕⊕○○ LOW	critical	

No. of studies	Study design	Quality assessment					No. of participants		Effect		Certainty (GRADE)	Importance
		Risk of bias	Inconsistency	Indirectness	Imprecision	Other considerations	Selective episiotomy	Routine episiotomy	Relative (95% CI)	Absolute (95% CI)		
Genital prolapse long-term (≥ 6 months)												
1	RCT	serious ^a	not serious	not serious	very serious ^{c,d}	none	2/179 (1.1%)	7/186 (3.8%)	RR 0.30 (0.06-1.41)	26 fewer per 1000 (from 15 more to 35 fewer)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	critical
Urinary incontinence long-term (≥ 6 months)												
3	RCTs	serious ^a	serious ^e	not serious	serious ^d	none	159/536 (29.7%)	184/571 (32.2%)	RR 0.98 (0.67-1.44)	6 fewer per 1000 (from 106 fewer to 142 more)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	critical
Need for perineal suturing												
6	RCTs	serious ^a	serious ^e	not serious	not serious	none	1380/2180 (63.3%)	1867/2153 (86.7%)	RR 0.68 (0.58-0.78)	277 fewer per 1000 (from 191 fewer to 364 fewer)	⊕⊕○○ LOW	critical
Pain at different time points (any measure) - any perineal pain at discharge												
2	RCTs	serious ^a	serious ^e	not serious	serious ^d	none	465/1301 (35.7%)	587/1286 (45.6%)	RR 0.85 (0.25-2.86)	68 fewer per 1000 (from 342 fewer to 849 more)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	critical
Pain at different time points (any measure) - any pain at 10 days												
1	RCT	serious ^a	not serious	not serious	serious ^d	none	99/439 (22.6%)	101/446 (22.6%)	RR 1.00 (0.78-1.27)	0 fewer per 1000 (from 50 fewer to 61 more)	⊕⊕○○ LOW	critical
Newborn Apgar score < 7 at 5 minutes												
2	RCTs	serious ^a	not serious	not serious	very serious ^{c,d}	none	0/249 (0.0%)	0/262 (0.0%)	not estimable	0 fewer per 1000 (from 10 more to 10 fewer)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	critical
Admission to special care baby unit												
5	RCTs	serious ^a	not serious	not serious	serious ^d	none	57/1236 (4.6%)	74/1235 (6.0%)	RR 0.77 (0.56-1.07)	14 fewer per 1000 (from 4 more to 26 fewer)	⊕⊕○○ LOW	critical

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

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

^c Small sample size and/or few events.

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

^e Severe unexplained heterogeneity.