

- Perineum: the skin and muscles of the pelvic floor
- Tearing is very a common occurrence and is graded based on severity<sup>4</sup>
- BUT you do heal, and usually very well.<sup>7</sup>
- Risk factors:
  - First time giving birth
  - Being either an older or younger mother
  - Asian descent
  - Nutrition
  - A bigger baby
  - Physiologic/anatomic differences<sup>5</sup>
- Risks during the birth itself
  - The position of the baby
  - Presence of an episiotomy
  - Needed an assisted birth (forces increases risk)
  - Longer pushing stage (second stage)
  - Shoulders being stuck (dystocia)
  - Interventions such as augmentation of labor (synthetic oxytocin)
- What should you do?
  - Promote normal physiologic labor
  - Communicate with your care providers regarding your wishes
  - Choose the position (and speed) in which you want to deliver the baby
  - Being upright may decrease episiotomy or use of instruments<sup>5</sup>
  - Consider perineal massage during pregnancy<sup>4S</sup>
  - Warm compresses during labor to the perineum<sup>5</sup>