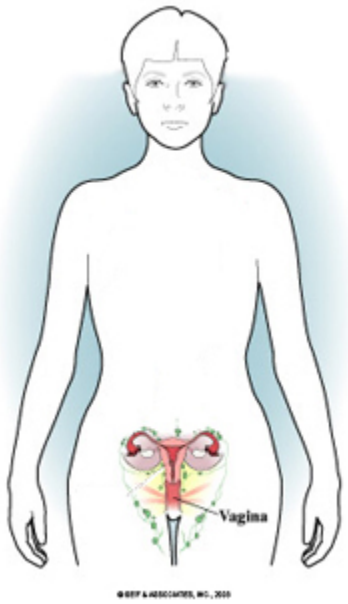
Vaginal Laceration

You have a laceration of the vagina. A laceration is a cut or tear. Small tears usually do not need stitches. Your caregiver may have to repair the tear with stitches for you. This brings the skin edges (*margins*) together and allows the cut to heal faster. Your caregiver will instruct you as to whether stitch (*suture*) removal is necessary. Some sutures are absorbed by the body without removal. Some vaginal lacerations can be very serious because of heavy bleeding. Therefore, medical evaluation is necessary right away.



CAUSES

- A controlled cutting of the vagina when delivering a baby (*episiotomy*).
- Delivering a baby without an episiotomy.
- Trauma made by a bicycle or car accident.
- Domestic violence and/or rape.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. **Do not** use aspirin because it can increase bleeding problems.
- Your caregiver may prescribe medicines that kill germs (*antibiotics*) or recommend a tetanus shot.
- You may resume normal diet and activities as directed.
- **Do not** douche, use tampons or have intercourse until your caregiver has given permission.
- A bandage (*dressing*) may have been applied. This may be changed once per day or as instructed. If the dressing sticks, it may be soaked off with soapy water or hydrogen peroxide.
- Warm sitz baths 2 to 3 times a day may help any discomfort and swelling of the laceration.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop a rash.
- You have problems with the medications.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is redness, swelling, or increasing pain in the vaginal area.
- Pus is coming from the wound or vagina.
- An unexplained oral temperature above 101° F (38.3° C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests.
- You notice a bad smell coming from the vagina. This may be a sign of infection.
- There is a breaking open of a wound (edges not staying together).
- You develop increasing belly (*abdominal*) pain.
- There is a lot of (*excessive*) vaginal bleeding.
- There is pain with intercourse after the laceration heals. Scar tissue may have developed.

YOU MIGHT NEED A TETANUS SHOT NOW IF:

- You have no idea when you had the last one.
- You have never had a tetanus shot before.
- Your cut had dirt in it.

If you need a tetanus shot, ***and you decide not to get one***, there is a rare chance of getting tetanus. Sickness from tetanus can be serious. *If you got a tetanus shot, your arm may swell, get red and warm to the touch at the shot site. This is common and not a problem.*

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