
Efficacy of Sitz Bath in Reducing Episiotomy Wound Pain Among Postnatal Mothers: Systematic Review

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Abstract: Episiotomy, a common surgical intervention during vaginal delivery, often results in significant postnatal discomfort and delayed recovery. Non-pharmacological interventions such as sitz baths have emerged as effective, accessible options for pain management and wound healing. This systematic review evaluates the efficacy of sitz bath therapy in reducing episiotomy wound pain among postnatal mothers. Data were collected from published literature between 2018 and 2022, along with findings from a quasi-experimental study involving 30 postnatal mothers (15 in experimental and 15 in control groups). The primary outcome—pain intensity—was measured using the Visual Analog Scale (VAS). The review included randomized controlled trials, comparative and observational studies, and quasi-experimental designs that met specific inclusion criteria. Findings consistently indicated that sitz baths significantly reduce episiotomy pain, enhance perineal healing, and improve maternal comfort compared to standard care or other non-pharmacological methods. Variations such as medicated sitz baths (e.g., lavender oil) may offer additional benefits. Given its simplicity, affordability, and high patient acceptability, sitz bath therapy should be widely promoted as a standard component of postpartum care. Training healthcare providers and educating postnatal mothers on proper usage could enhance maternal outcomes, especially in resource-limited settings.

Keywords: Episiotomy, Postnatal Pain, Sitz Bath Therapy, Perineal Care, Wound Healing, Non-Pharmacological Intervention

Introduction:

Episiotomy is commonly performed to facilitate childbirth, yet it often results in postoperative discomfort, pain, and slower recovery. Addressing postnatal pain is essential for enabling mobility, improving maternal-infant bonding, and supporting breastfeeding. Non-invasive methods like sitz baths, which promote blood flow and hygiene, are promising yet underutilized interventions in many healthcare settings.

Sitz baths involve immersing the perineal area in warm water, which helps in reducing inflammation, promoting circulation, and maintaining local hygiene. These effects collectively aid in relieving episiotomy pain and facilitating faster wound healing. Pain management during the postnatal period is crucial not only for physical recovery but also for enhancing psychological well-being and maternal functioning.

Despite clinical evidence supporting the use of sitz baths, they are not uniformly integrated into routine postpartum care across all settings. This highlights a gap in practice that may affect the quality of maternal recovery.

This systematic review aims to evaluate existing evidence on the efficacy of sitz bath therapy in managing episiotomy-related pain, highlighting its role in enhancing maternal recovery during the postnatal period.

Methodology**Review Design**

This is a systematic review using both primary data (from a quasi-experimental study) and secondary data (published literature). The review followed PRISMA guidelines to ensure clarity and replicability.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

Studies were selected from Indian and international journals published between 2018 and 2022, using search terms such as "episiotomy pain," "sitz bath," "perineal care," and "postnatal wound healing." Databases included PubMed, Google Scholar, and regional nursing journals.

Inclusion Criteria

- Studies on sitz bath intervention for episiotomy pain
- Postnatal mothers within 48 hours of vaginal delivery
- Both randomized and quasi-experimental designs
- English language publications

Exclusion Criteria

Studies focusing on cesarean sections

Pharmacological interventions only

Non-English studies

Results

Across all reviewed studies, sitz baths were consistently effective in reducing episiotomy wound pain. The key findings are summarized below:

Study	Design	Sample Size	Findings
Kalaivani (2020)	Experimental	40	Significant reduction in pain and faster wound healing
Sheoran et al. (2018)	Comparative	30	Sitz bath more effective than infrared therapy
Raj & Ganguly (2021)	Observational	50	Reported improvement in comfort and hygiene
Chadha & Podder (2020)	RCT	35	Lavender oil sitz baths enhanced healing
Current Study (Mondal et al., 2025)	Quasi-Experimental	30	Experimental group showed significantly lower post-test pain scores ($p < 0.05$)

Discussion

The reviewed literature and current research collectively affirm that sitz bath therapy leads to statistically and clinically significant reductions in pain among postnatal mothers. Mechanistically, sitz baths enhance local circulation, reduce inflammation, and maintain perineal hygiene.

Variations like medicated (e.g., lavender, halite salt, betadine) sitz baths may offer added benefits, though further large-scale studies are required to compare efficacy. The low cost, ease of administration, and patient satisfaction further support integration of sitz baths into routine maternal care, especially in resource-constrained settings.

Conclusion

Sitz bath therapy is a scientifically supported, low-cost, and patient-friendly intervention for managing episiotomy wound pain. Given its demonstrated benefits, midwives and nurses should be trained to educate mothers on its use and include it in postnatal protocols.

Recommendations

- Incorporate sitz bath education into antenatal and postnatal counseling.
- Conduct multi-center RCTs comparing medicated vs. non-medicated sitz baths.
- Develop guidelines for standardized administration of sitz baths.

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