

# OBSTETRIC FISTULA

An obstetric fistula is a hole or abnormal opening between the birth canal (genital tract) with the urinary tract (bladder) and/or anus (rectum) from which continuous leaking of urine and/or feces occurs into the vagina. This causes constant incontinence of leaking urine and feces, or both, in addition to chronic medical problems, depression, and social isolation.

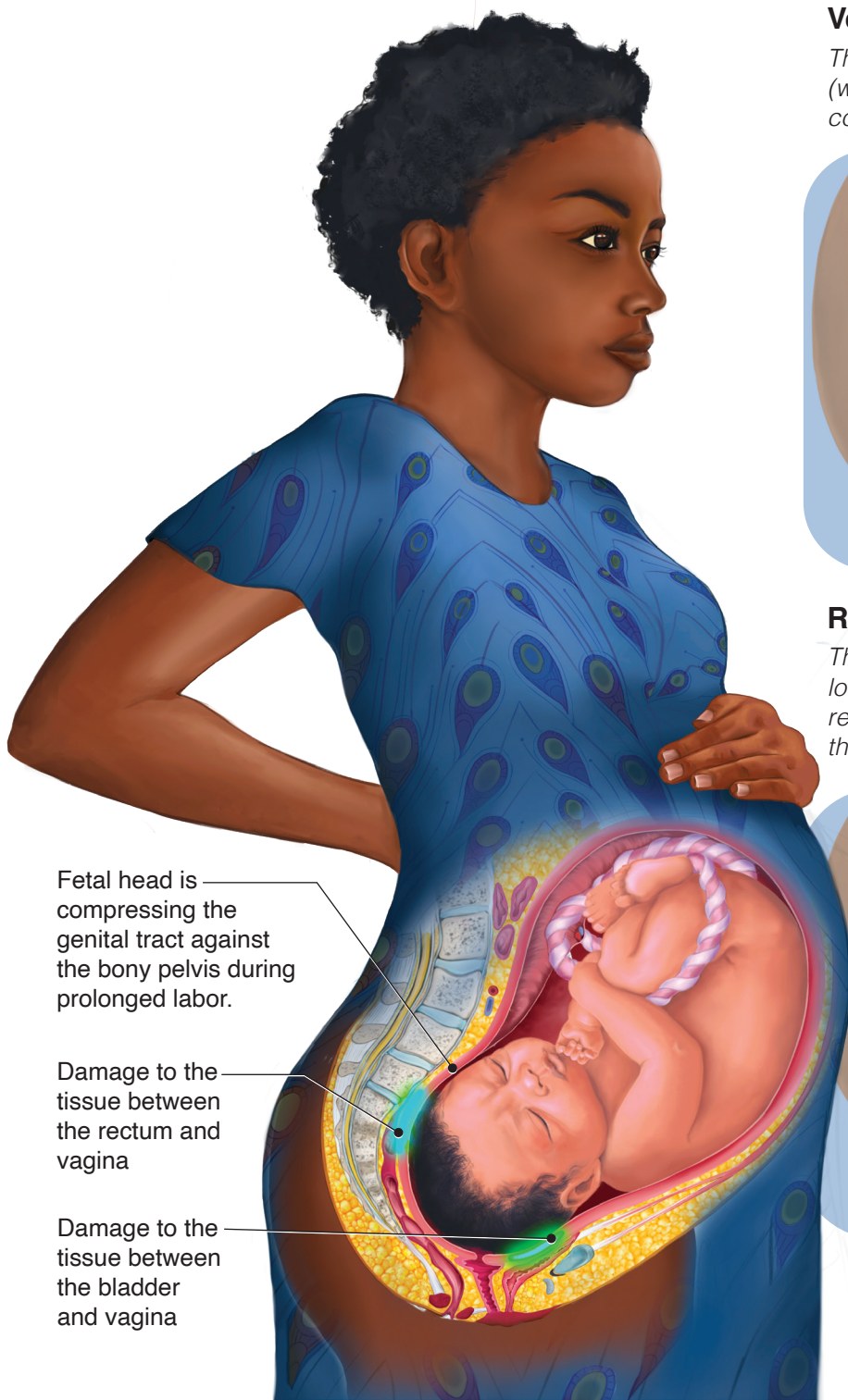
Obstetric fistula is caused by a prolonged, obstructed childbirth, when

a woman lacks access to emergency medical care. This causes significant and devastating trauma and injury to the rectum and vagina during childbirth, and is a leading cause in maternal mortality. Sadly the vast majority of pregnancies involving a fistula end in stillbirth.

Every year 50 – 100,000 women are affected by obstetric fistula, and an estimated 2 million young women in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa live with

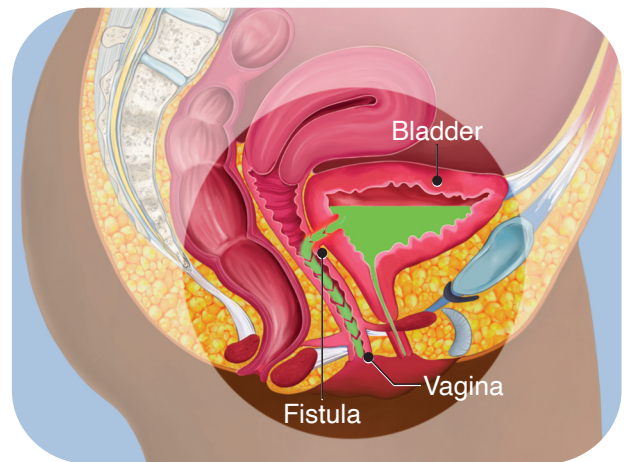
untreated obstetric fistula. Obstetric fistula is entirely preventable and has been virtually eliminated in industrialized nations.

Better access to obstetric healthcare supported by investment and political leadership could eradicate obstetric fistula, in addition to encourage marriage and childbirth and transform the lives of the vulnerable women in resource-poor countries who are most at risk.



## Vesicovaginal fistula

*This is an abnormal connection between the bladder (which stores urine) and the vagina resulting in continuous urine leakage through the vagina.*



## Rectovaginal fistula

*This is an abnormal connection between the lower part of the large intestine and the vagina resulting in leaking of bowel contents and gas through to the vagina.*

