

VAGINA OPENING DURING BIRTH

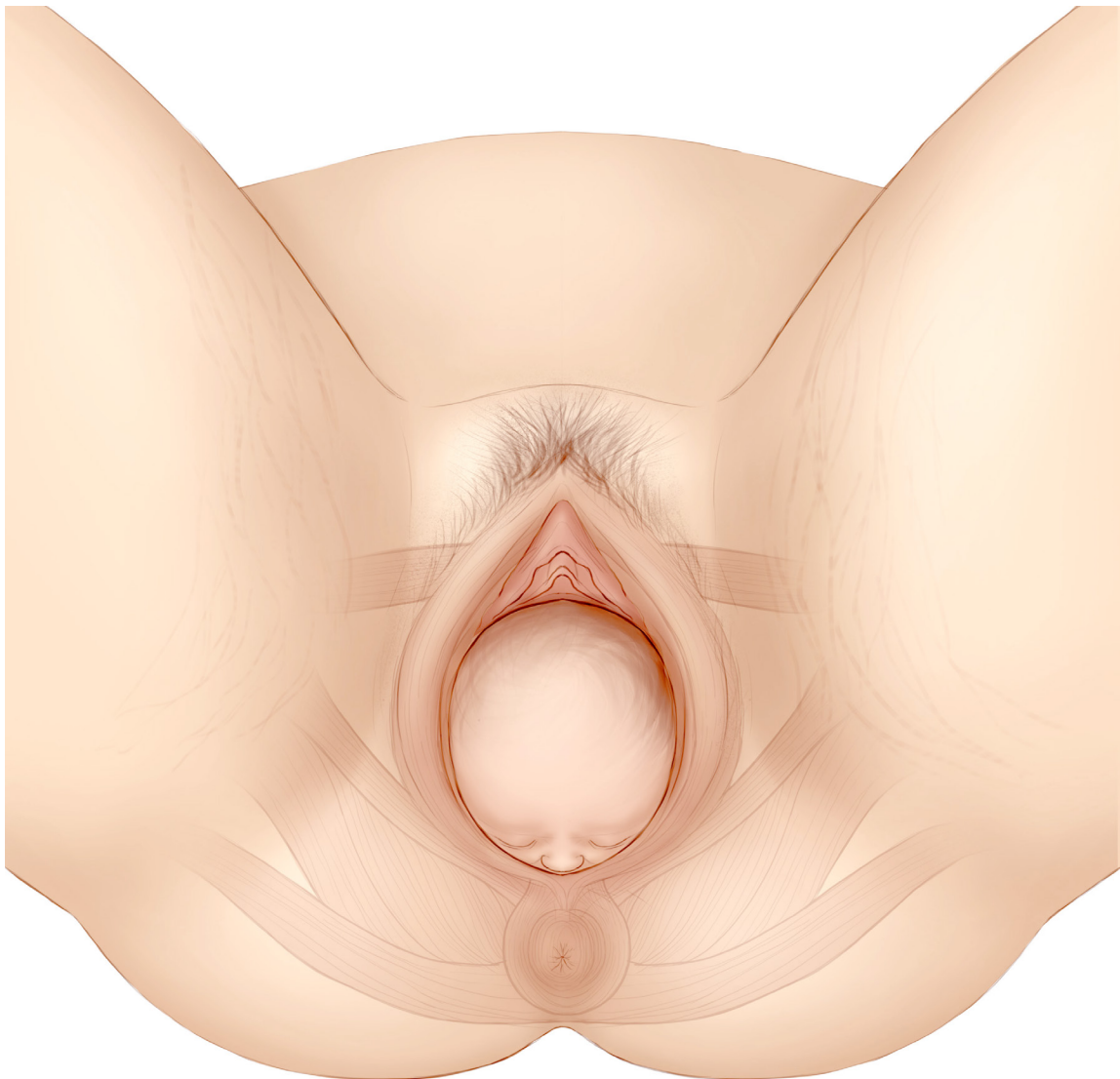
A vaginal delivery is when a person gives birth through their vagina. It's the most common method of childbirth. During a vaginal birth, your uterus contracts to thin and open your cervix and push your baby out through your vagina (or birth canal).

As delivery progresses, the cervix becomes fully open (dilated), thinned and pulled back (effaced). This process is required for the baby to be able to pass through the birth canal.

At that time, the woman is asked to bear down and push with each contraction to help move the fetus's head down through her pelvis and to widen the vaginal opening so that more and more of the head appears.

As the baby enters the vagina, your skin and muscles stretch. The labia and perineum (the area between the vagina and the rectum) eventually reach a point of maximum stretching. At this point, the skin may feel like it's burning. This burning sensation is often referred to as "the ring of fire." The ring refers to the circle your baby's head makes as it pushes on and stretches your vaginal opening, and the fire refers to the burning, stinging sensation you may feel.

Some women don't experience the ring of fire. If you have an epidural, you may not have this sensation, or you may have a dulled burning sensation. Or you may only feel pressure, without burning.



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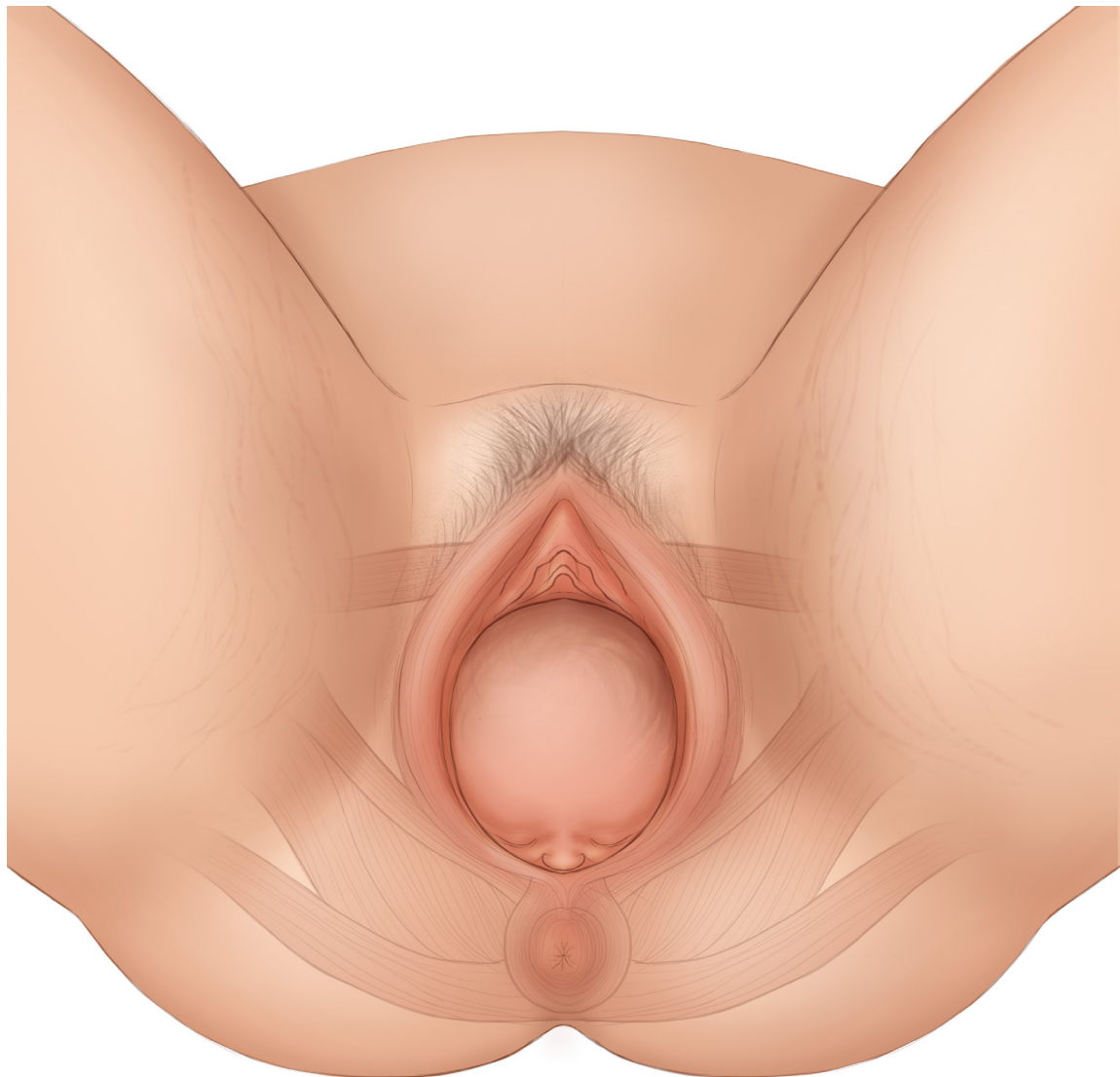
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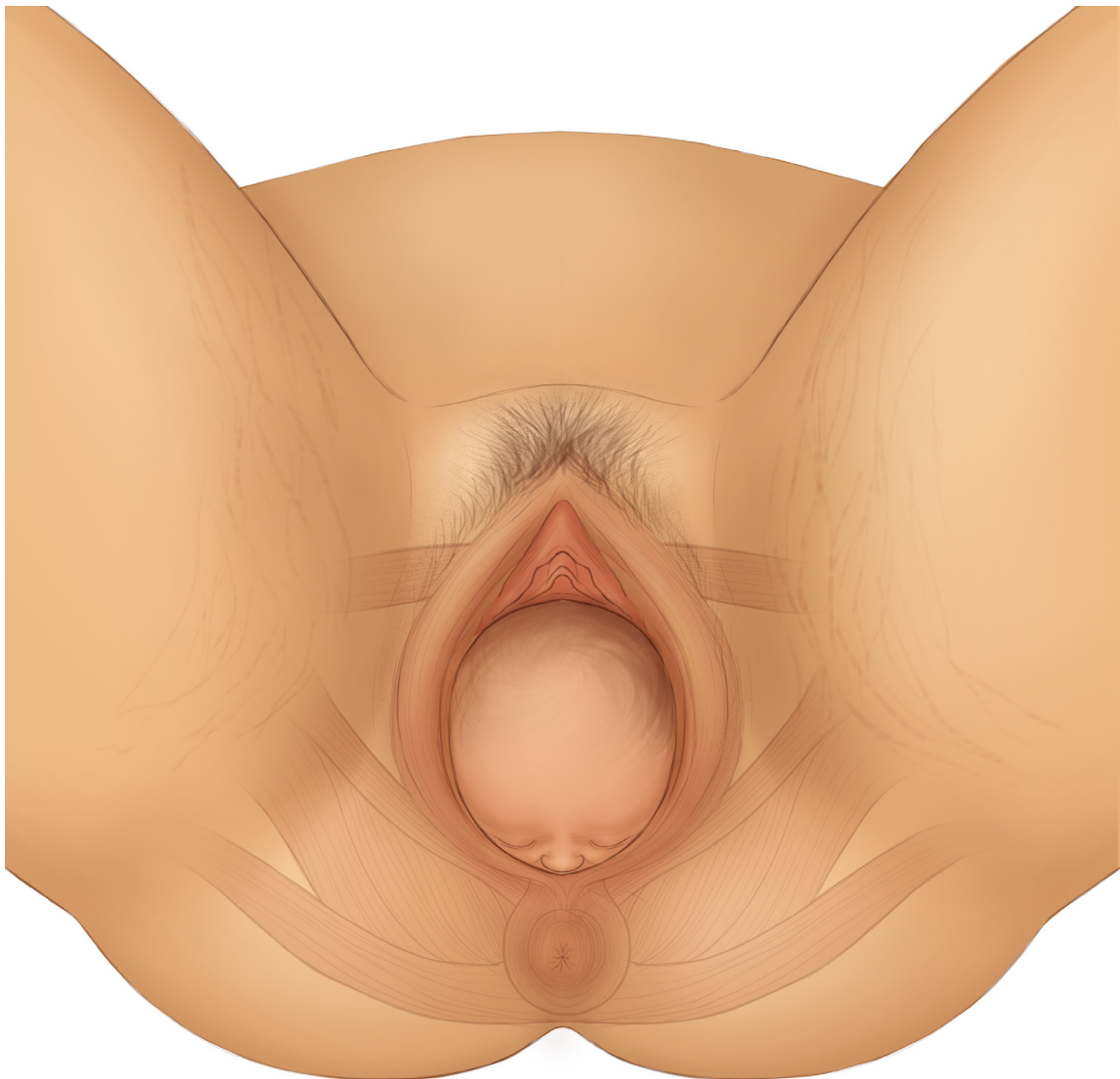
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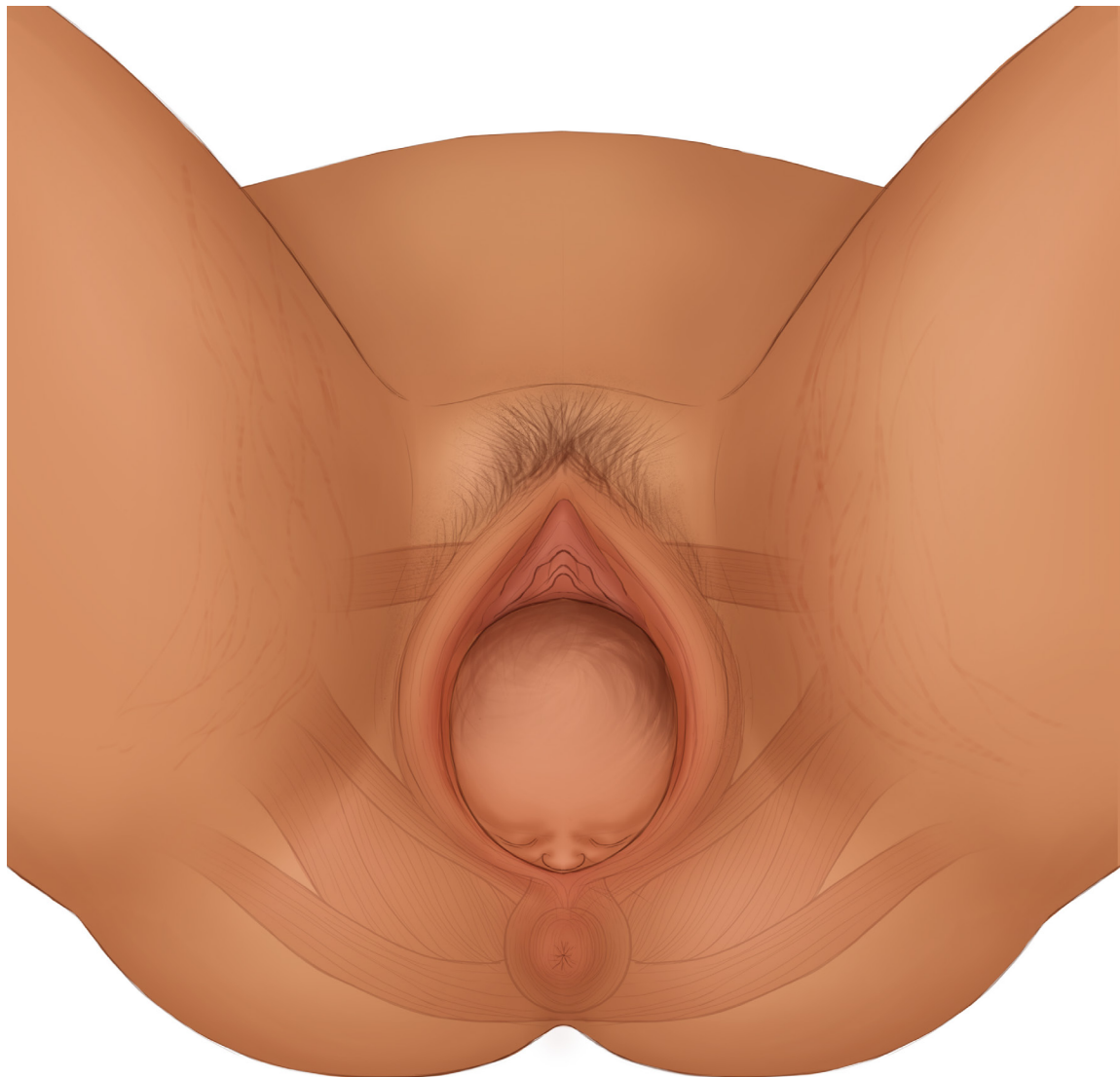
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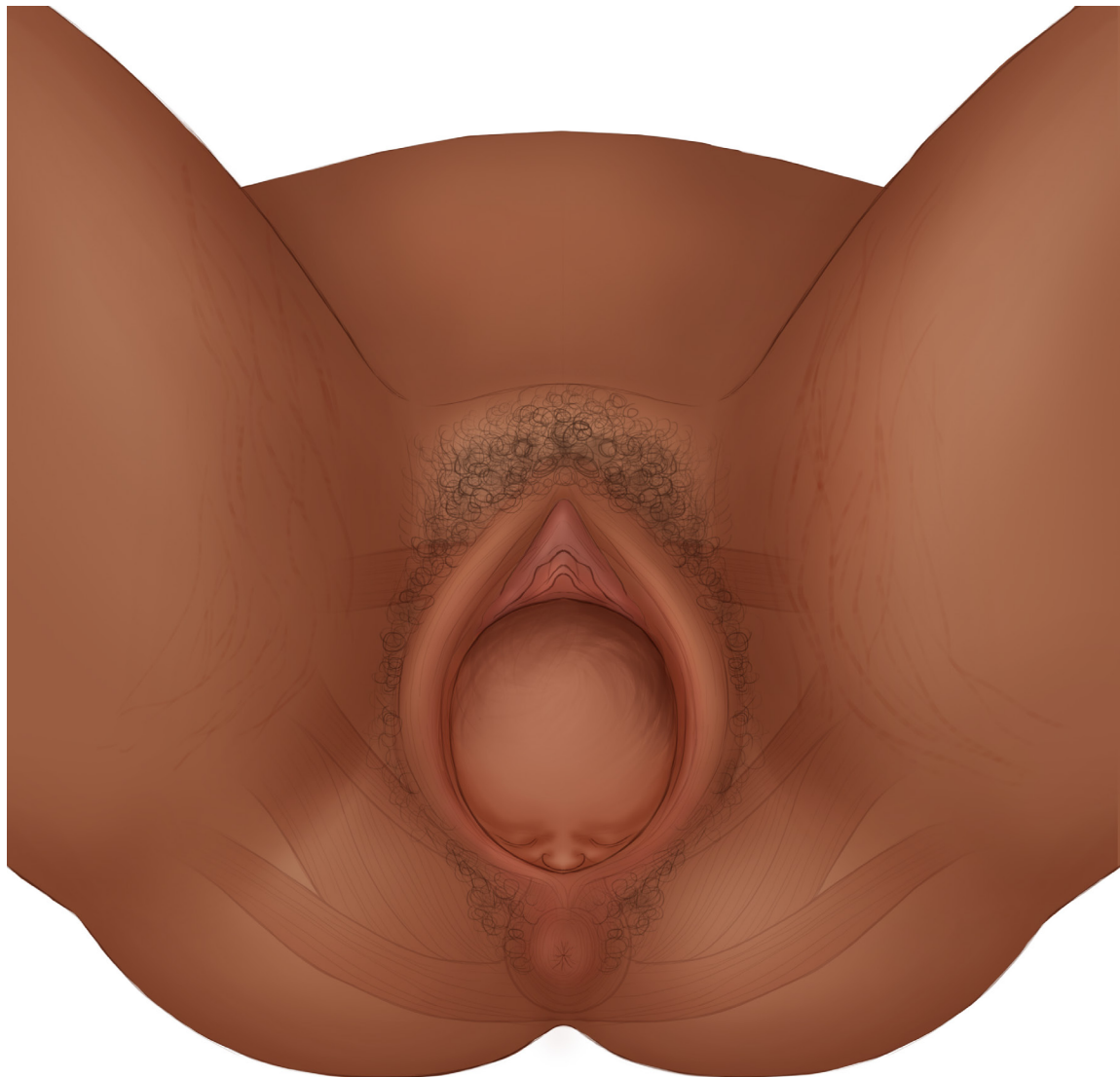
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