

Fourth Trimester Podcast

Episode 46: Vaginal Steaming AKA "Peristeam Hydrotherapy"

Sarah Trott: [00:00:05] My name is Sarah Trott. I'm a new mama to a baby girl and this podcast is all about postpartum care for the few months following birth, the time period also known as the Fourth Trimester. My postpartum doula, Esther Gallagher, is my co-host. She's a mother, grandmother, perinatal educator, birth and postpartum care provider. I've benefited hugely from her support. All parents can benefit from the wisdom and support that a postpartum Doula provides. Fourth trimester care is about the practical, emotional and social support parents and baby require, and importantly, helps set the tone for the lifelong journey of parenting.

When I first became pregnant, I had never heard of postpartum Doulas, let alone knew what they did. So much of the training and preparation that expecting parents do is focused on the birth and newborn care. Once a baby is born, often the first interaction parents have with medical or child professionals, other than the first pediatrician visits, is the six-week checkup with the OB/GYN. *What about caring for mama and family between the birth and the six week doctor visit? What are the strategies for taking care of the partner and the rest of the family while looking after your newborn?*

Our podcasts contain expert interviews with specialists from many fields to cover topics including postpartum doula practices, prenatal care, prenatal and postnatal yoga, parenting, breastfeeding, physical recovery from birth, nutrition, newborn care, midwifery, negotiating family visitation, and many more.

First-hand experience is shared through lots of stories from both new and seasoned parents. Hear what other parents are asking and what they have done in their own lives.

We reference other podcasts, internet resources and real-life experts who can help you on your own parenting journey. Visit us at <http://fourthtrimesterpodcast.com>

Sarah Trott: [00:00:05] Hi, I'm Sarah Trott and welcome to the fourth trimester podcast. I'm a new mama and this podcast is all about postpartum care for the first few months following birth. The time period also known as the fourth trimester. My postpartum doula, Esther Gallagher, is my co host. She's a mother, grandmother, perinatal educator, birth and postpartum care provider, fourth trimester care. Our topic is about the practical, emotional and social support parents at baby require. And importantly, it helps set the tone for the continuing journey of parenting. Hey, everybody, this is Sarah Trott from the Fourth Trimester podcast. And before we kick off this episode, I wanted to share with you something that's a little bit special for this episode. We joined up with the guest from the show, Keli Garza, to offer all of our listeners a little bit of a perk. So here it is. After listening to the show and hearing more information, we highly encourage you to go to Keli's website, which is steamy dot com, and you can use coupon code fourth trimester, all one word fourth trimester to benefit from free shipping a \$40 value, which is something she's got an offer for everyone at the moment, but I don't know how long that will last. But plus another \$20 off the vaginal steam sauna package and also \$20 off an E course called Postpartum Paris Time Care How to use vaginal Steaming for full recovery after birth. You can find links to these things and the coupon code on the website, fourth trimester podcast dot com. So please take advantage. We'd love for all of our listeners to benefit from this exclusive offer.

Sarah Trott: [00:01:49] And without further ado. Onto the show. Thank you. Hi, this is Sarah Trott. Welcome back to the fourth trimester podcast. Today we have a guest, Keli Garza, with us and I'll introduce her in a moment. Esther Gallagher is also on the podcast with us today. So it's a full house. Hooray. As a reminder, the fourth trimester podcast dot com website is where you need to go to find all of our social pages. You can click through from there on to our Facebook and our Twitter and our other social accounts. Pinterest, Instagram. You can also sign up for our newsletter by going to the top of the page. There's a button for newsletter. Please do sign up if you haven't done so already. And there's also a link for you to join us as sponsors through Patreon. If you think that you have it in your heart to just sponsor us, please do. It would go a long way. We want to get some better recording equipment today. We have an awesome topic is something I didn't know a lot about. Esther. I'm sure you knew all about it, but the topic is vaginal steaming. And we have Keli Garza here today who's an expert in this area.

She holds a master's degree in international development, and she graduated Khumalo. She is a social science researcher by academic training, and she spent the past several years doing women's health research and has founded a new field of discipline called Periosteum Hydrotherapy. So I think that's just another way of saying vaginal steaming can set me straight on that, Keli.

Keli Garza: [00:03:20] Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:03:24] Perfect. Having recorded over 700 Peristeam hydrotherapy case studies, she holds the only known research database of its kind. She's worked to develop vaginal steam treatment protocols, which are now becoming the industry standard. Her approach is unique in that she tailors the treatment based on different menstrual patterns and she works with an Oriental medicine doctor who prescribes specific herbs in the formulas. At steamy Chick, Keli oversees all operations and instructs online courses and steamy dot com is her website. So you can go there and read more about all of that. But Keli, thank you so much for joining us today. We're so honored to have you.

Keli Garza: [00:04:03] Thank you so much for having me.

Sarah Trott: [00:04:05] We here at the fourth trimester podcast would love to hear your experiences with your own fourth trimester.

Keli Garza: [00:04:11] Sure. Sure. Okay. Well, I got Pregnant with my first my first daughter Lotus, when I was 33, and at the time I had been using vaginal steaming for a couple of years. At the end of my period, I'd heard that after your period is over, you do one vaginal steam and then. And then that's it. And so I had been using it like that for a couple of years, but when I was pregnant with Lotus, I was I was really focused on setting up a postpartum plan for myself. And so I Was Part of a Facebook Group, of course, of Expecting moms A secret group.

Keli Garza: [00:04:51] And and I was actually I did an unassisted birth. So this was a group of of women who who do who were doing unassisted births. And so one of them

was from Ghana. And she mentions that that in Ghana they do 30 days of vaginal steaming after giving birth. And I was like, oh, my gosh, vaginal steaming. You know, I do that. I have a vaginal steam sauna. So I decided that I would do 30 days of vaginal steaming as part of my postpartum plan. So I had that. And then I was also I had I had read a Book Called City Moon Have you heard of that book, Sarah?

Sarah Trott: [00:05:31] No, I'm am fascinated to know more about it.

Keli Garza: [00:05:34] So it's sitting alone And it was it's by a an acupuncturist named Jessica Chen. I hope I'm getting it right. And she was writing all about the Taiwanese post partum experience. And basically in Taiwan, women look forward to their postpartum month because they are treated like queens So they have the most advanced probably postpartum protocol That I've ever heard of in the world. And so now How did I get this book? I got this book.

Keli Garza: [00:06:08] Because I was I was going to an acupuncturist and this was before I was pregnant or interested in anything birth related. And and my sister was pregnant a couple of years before, before my first pregnancy. And I was like, Do you have any books for Her during pregnancy? And they were like, No. They were like, But here's one about postpartum.

Keli Garza: [00:06:27] I'm like, postpartum that's already after. I'm like, Who cares? I really wasn't like, I didn't get it. So but since they didn't have any other books, I was like, Okay, I guess I'll get that. So I got That book and I gave it to my Sister.

Keli Garza: [00:06:42] And the book was all about how you know, that women need like the postpartum month is a time, it's a golden opportunity. They consider it for a woman's life where she has a chance to completely change her course of health. She has a chance to completely reset like her, her health, and and be incredibly healthy moving forward. And in according to traditional Chinese medicine, a lot of headache pains and prolapse and all kinds of women's women's issues.

Keli Garza: [00:07:19] They actually they actually relate it back to the woman not properly recovering postpartum. So proper postpartum recovery is huge in in Chinese medicine and specifically in Taiwan. They have this really great system where they have like these hotels that women go to. They're like these postpartum hotels. And the women receive five meals per day that are prepared for them. And all they do is hang out in the in the suite with the baby and nap all day long. There are night nurses that take care of the baby. You know, any time there's naps so that the mom can get she's supposed to get like 10 hours of sleep every night and nap during the day as well.

Keli Garza: [00:08:02] And the mother's not supposed to do any work. She's not even supposed to. They barely even let her, like, you know, be on her feet. You know, she can do stretching in bed and she could go to the bathroom and shower and all that. But for the most part, they just want her to be resting in bed this whole time. And they wait on her like she's a queen.

Keli Garza: [00:08:21] And so that's what the book talks about. And now Jessica Chen grew up in the US, so she's like, you know, she Basically has kind Of like a modified, you know, rendition of this that she did for her own postpartum care. And so she in the book, she has all of these these postpartum meal plans for how to do your postpartum period. So so anyhow, so when I was postpartum, I was like, okay, I definitely want to do all of those meal plans. And then I found out about the vaginal steaming. So I decided I would definitely do the vaginal steaming. And I invited my mother in law to come and stay with me.

Keli Garza: [00:08:57] She she Wanted to she came to stay with us and She helped with the housework and with the cooking for that month. And it was a really beautiful experience. Like I have to say, I felt healthier. I was also taking so with the postpartum meal plans, they had all these herbs that you could take as well. So I was taking a postpartum herbal formula that was made by an acupuncturist, and I felt better than I had ever felt in my whole life during that postpartum period, just being cared for and being able to bond with the baby. So so I did it. I did the 30 days of vaginal steaming and I did.

Keli Garza: [00:09:35] The 30 days of eating the postpartum Meals Some of them were pretty Foreign, like I was eating liver soup with goji Berries in it and all these other traditional Meals. But my Breast milk was was Pumped and I had so much breast milk, my baby gained four pounds in the first month. And she's only, you know, normal would be like one pound. She gained four pounds. It was crazy. So so it was it was a it was a Really interesting experience. And and ever since I've been very passionate about the fourth trimester and that women properly prepare for it because if you properly Prepare for it.

Keli Garza: [00:10:14] It will be so wonderful. But what I see from so many of my other friends that go through the experiences, that they're not prepared and they spend all of the time buying baby baby gear and very little money on the actual mom and her recovery.

Sarah Trott: [00:10:29] Mm hmm. Yeah. Very little. Probably monetary investment, but also mental and emotional investment, you know, preparing oneself and actually thinking about what that will be like. Yeah. We spend a ton of time on this show talking about that, that piece of it that's like, Oh, you think about your nursery and you think about all of these other things, but you know, and you think about the baby, which is like the right priority for sure. But also like the point that we like to make over and over is parents are much better suited to care for the baby if they themselves are taken care of.

Keli Garza: [00:10:59] Absolutely. Absolutely How are you going to take care of your. Baby and your uterus is falling out? You know what I mean? Like, and I feel like this is one of the reasons and you want to take care of Your baby, but your breast milk hasn't come in, you know? And so the baby cries when you have a lot of breast milk, you have a baby that doesn't cry, you know, And getting so with that, with that whole postpartum meal plan, the idea is that you give the mom herbs and the right soup as soon as possible after giving birth within an hour, because that brings her breast milk in. And and I did find that to be, you know, something you know just one one less thing to worry about for sure. And my baby, she never cried. And and I attribute it to the breast milk.

Esther Gallagher: [00:11:43] So, Keli, I just want to interrupt for a moment and and just say that. I, I think the the Asian orientation towards postpartum care and I've said this for four decades now is much more informed and healthy and normalizing and appropriate to the kind of human condition when it comes to giving birth to our babies and how that works. I want us to be careful on this podcast to about attributing things to things. It's normal and physiological that your breast milk is going to come in. I think the the wonderful soups and herbs are a wonderful support, but they don't cause things to happen or not happen.

Esther Gallagher: [00:12:40] So. I myself am continually recommending all of these things to to my clients or any woman that I come in contact with. So I just I just want to be the person to say, like I work in postpartum homes every day. That's what I do. And and I think it's really wonderful and awesome. And, you know, here we have these these wonderful services now around us because we're lucky to live in the Bay Area and have places where women who otherwise would not have the first clue how to prepare these very nourishing and supportive meals. And I. Are there other supports, herbs, etc. can find access to these things? You're one of those resources which is awesome. So yeah, I just wanted to mention that, you know, the body is hopefully prepared to do all these things and the body benefits deeply from these supports.

Keli Garza: [00:13:52] I think that's very well said, Esther.

Sarah Trott: [00:13:54] And I always like to add kind of a practical layer on discussions like this. I've had with friends of mine and just people I've met preparing to have a baby, thinking about it just around. Well, it's certainly not going to hurt. And if it adds something positive and it makes you feel good and it makes your family feel good, then do it. Give yourself that love and support. Create that environment that makes you feel the way you want to feel. And I and I think what you eat and how you practice and how you care for yourself is all part of that.

Keli Garza: [00:14:29] Absolutely. In traditional Chinese medicine, they actually they totally associate what the mom is eating with whether or not her breast milk is going to

come in. So after This postpartum experience, anytime anybody had low breast milk, they would reach out to me. And a lot of times I'd say like, well, what are you eating?

Keli Garza: [00:14:50] We're like, whatever I can with, you know, just snack in here and there. And it's like, okay, well Focus on eating. And a lot of times that alone, I did notice you had an improvement. However, in Western medicine, we don't see it that way. And a lot of times and absolutely like what you said, Esther, the breast milk comes in naturally. That's that's part of what is what is supposed to happen. And the body knows how to do it naturally. But sometimes I do believe that if we don't support the body properly, that's where we end up with problems. Because not everybody's breast milk comes in, you know?

Esther Gallagher: [00:15:32] Right. And I also agree with you very deeply, Keli, that, you know, a mom may do a superlative job in the in the biological sense of producing milk and healing and recovering in those first 40 days. Without support, however. I think this perspective that's so wise in Chinese medicine and around the world really typically in Asian traditions, is that it doesn't mean even when things go well, it doesn't mean that the mom's body isn't overtaxed if it isn't well nourished, and that that overtaxation will in the end be become erosive to the mother's well being in her lifetime. And this is what I just love about the kinds of work that we do and the kinds of information we try to give women, which is you count in this process.

Esther Gallagher: [00:16:46] You you're you get to have this life and you get to go on from this life and taking care of being taken care of well and deeply in the fourth trimester serves you not only in the immediate present, but for the rest of your life. As you said, Keli, at the beginning, and I really I'm always thrilled when I hear that reiterated. So thank you. Do you want to tell us any more about your fourth trimester? And then, of course, we can't wait to hear about vaginal steaming or you're calling it pre steaming. Is that correct? Is that what you call it?

Keli Garza: [00:17:30] Yeah, I call it I call it vaginal steaming, because that's you know what the term that that we're familiar with. But in in the I am working on

professionalizing the practice and in the like the professional term that I use for it is Peristeam hydrotherapy.

Esther Gallagher: [00:17:46] Yeah. I mean technically we're talking about the perineum. Yeah. We're not going up inside the the vagina, which is an internal organ. Yeah.

Keli Garza: [00:17:59] Well good. The only last thing that I would add, you know, just to go from what you were saying, Esther, is that, you know, for moms to remember that they count, you know, after giving birth is that actually I did receive some pushback When I was planning when I was pregnant and I was Planning my postpartum month. There were some people behind my back that were whispering That I was so Selfish. I was so selfish because I was focused on On funding my postpartum month.

Keli Garza: [00:18:32] And so some of my family members were whispering this. And then, you know, of course, another family member let me know. And it was really a moment for me when I had to sit there and think about it, like, am I being selfish?

Esther Gallagher: [00:18:51] No.

Keli Garza: [00:18:53] And it's something that I heard somebody else mention as well when they were planning for a postpartum month, which is just like, oh, you know, like, I don't want people to think I'm so selfish or so self involved. So it's just something to be aware of and to think about ahead of the time that there might be that perception. And that's somehow a strange a strange perception that we have in the West. But it might happen, you know.

Esther Gallagher: [00:19:16] Well, not only that, but I think that those as with so many of these sort of anti humane orientations in our world, we we do have a way, if we've grown up in this culture of having internalized that like, oh, I, I, I don't matter and I'm going to be okay. And that's just how it's going to be. So there isn't any need for looking ahead to my well being. Yeah, I just I really think it's interesting that I. You know, there's that question like, why are you being so selfish? And I think the best answer in some

ways is, well, because someday I might be a grandmother. If I'm having a child now, I need to survive long enough to support my child when they have a child.

Keli Garza: [00:20:18] Nice.

Sarah Trott: [00:20:20] Oh, my gosh. Please don't anyone feel selfish. Taking care of yourself is the best thing you can do for your baby, because it's not an either or choice. You can take care of your baby and take care of yourself and in fact, take care of yourself. Because it means that if you sleep and you eat and you do the things that you need to do at a base level, then and you recover well, it means you have more energy and resources available for your infant.

Keli Garza: [00:20:48] Absolutely.

Sarah Trott: [00:20:49] Please, no one listening Feel selfish. You're doing you're doing the right thing. You're being the opposite of selfish. You're being Giving.

Esther Gallagher: [00:20:57] Not only that, you would have been praised for spending thousands of dollars on your wedding, which is one day of your life, right? And being relative to the world, rather indulgent for one day. And yet this is going to be, you know. Many, many, many years of your life that you're now a parent that needs to be in reasonable shape for for the project of parenting. So.

Sarah Trott: [00:21:34] What is vaginal steaming?

Keli Garza: [00:21:37] Vaginal steaming (peristeam hydrotherapy) is an ancient practice. It has been practiced all over the entire world. And all over Africa. All over Africa. I found it all over Asia, the Middle East, in different parts of Europe. I found it in Italy, Sweden and Germany, in different Native American tribes, and both the Navajo tribe and the Lakota tribe, as well as down in Guatemala with the Mayans. It's something that's practiced in Surinam, in the Caribbean, in Haiti and Jamaica. Trinidad and Tobago. And then it's also practice in the South Pacific. So literally everywhere in

the world where you can find women, vaginal steaming is practiced. And what it is, is it's something that it's. Traditionally midwives used to administer for postpartum care.

Keli Garza: [00:22:31] So after a woman would have a baby, she would do a vaginal steam. So vaginal steaming, the way it looks like is there's basically going to be a pot with with herbs in it and heated. So is this steam rising and that the mother can sit on a steam seat with a hole in it or on a birthing chair, or sometimes they'll have her squat and somebody will support her. And so she sits there and lets the steam go between the legs to the perineum. And depending on how long she sits there, steam actually will rise and and help to pool all of the postpartum matter and lock down out of the uterus. In addition, the steam also helps to tighten the skin so that at tight ends the vaginal canal back up and it also helps to push the uterus and the organs back up into place because rising steam pushes things up. And so it is an ideal, ideal treatment for postpartum recovery to actually help the body go back to its pre pregnancy state.

Sarah Trott: [00:23:44] So people do peristeamming whether or not they have a baby just for general health, is that right?

Keli Garza: [00:23:48] Yes. So and so I've found steaming and I think like 26 countries at this point and every single one of those places steaming is used for postpartum care. And about half of those places, it's also used for gynecological care, whether it's a preventative practice. So in South Korea, for example, I talked to a South Korean woman who told me they use it once a month after the period is over, and it's just used to help make sure that there's nothing left over and in the uterus and that and that no problems arise. And so what the woman told me is if you do your your steam, your vaginal steam once a month after the period, you'll never have to have any problems. Let's that's what she told me. So she said, but you can also use it if there's any problems.

Keli Garza: [00:24:35] The first thing you should Do is do a vaginal steaming. So that's that was you know, it's commonly used in Korea for as a preventative measure and then also to treat gynecological disorders. And so there are there are other places where it's also used for gynecological disorders. But what I in my research, what I always know,

what it's used for when it's used and which herbs are used. And what I found is that the partum use of vaginal steaming is universal and also that it's most commonly found used among midwives and usually traditional midwives. So so it's not it's not a common practice in the West and and in certain places. Everybody in the country does it. So for example, the country of Palau, everyone does it, Cambodia, everybody does it.

Keli Garza: [00:25:27] And then you've Got Korea and then and Haiti. Those are some of the places in the world where it's actually just common practice and everybody knows about it and everybody does it. But then there's other places some women know about it, but it is there. So for example, so for example, for example, in Mexico, it's practice, practice, but it's practiced in the indigenous communities by the traditional midwives. So the general population doesn't necessarily know about it, but the traditional midwives that still are in practice in the Indigenous communities are aware of the practice and they're using it.

Esther Gallagher: [00:26:04] I had midwifery training and I have been a postpartum doula for a very long time and this is relatively new to me. I of course provide my clients with Sitz Bath where they get into the bath tub and enjoy a warm, shallow, no bath for their vulva and their whole perineal area. But only this year did I start hearing about this steaming approach, which sounds kind of lovely, I have to say. Kind of fun and and different. But I do have a couple of questions. So for instance, are there specific remedies for, say, perineal tears? Are there specific remedies whether these are herbal or tech technical for hemorrhoids? Are there specific remedies for your arthritis or. Uh, you know, if a mom's having any kind of urinary incontinence. So can you speak to those specifics? So.

Keli Garza: [00:27:31] Around the world, there are different herbal remedies. Like, usually the herbs are going to vary by lochiation because there are different plants that grow everywhere in the world. So my company, I make an herbal blend that is for postpartum use. And so the herbs included and necessary for postpartum recovery. For example, if you have a tear, you're going to want some herbs that are going to help to disinfect that tear. You don't want it to get infected and it's going to help it. You know, as long as it's clean, it's going to it's going to heal up quickly. Right. So so I include

disinfecting herbs in there in case there's any tears. And that's also helpful for when there are stitches as well.

Keli Garza: [00:28:15] And then for hemorrhoids, hemorrhoids happen. The woman can use the steaming for hemorrhoids. And in fact, they work really quickly to help resolve postpartum hemorrhoids. And so what the woman does is she has to tilt back and let the steam hit the rectum. And I include herbs in the blends that help to tighten the skin and help to reduce skin swelling. And those are the herbs that help to resolve those postpartum hemorrhoids. And then as far as incontinence. So really the the best thing to do is to do in my in my opinion, the best thing to do is to do a postpartum steam protocol and to do it for 30 days in a row.

Keli Garza: [00:29:01] So with my first baby, I was able to do the postpartum steaming for 30 days in a row. And with my second, I wasn't. There were a couple things that got in the way, and I noticed a huge difference in the recovery when I was able to do that. Those 30 days of steaming back to back and my body went entirely back to its pre pregnancy state. And one of the interesting moments was when the midwife came and checked my came to do a checkup after a week and she said she she felt around and she said, oh my gosh, she says your uterus is back down to its normal size. She says, Your uterus is the size that it should be four weeks from now. And I was like, Yeah, well, I was like, I've been doing vaginal steaming.

Keli Garza: [00:29:45] I don't know if that, you know, has has something to do with it, but yeah, but, so I believe, I believe what's helping the tightening the vaginal canal and getting the uterus, getting all of the lochia to come out of the uterus which happens a lot quicker than without the steaming. So like for example, I didn't have any lochia after I think it was after my fifth steam. I started steaming the day after giving birth. So like within the first, within the first week after giving birth, I didn't have a drop of key after that.

Sarah Trott: [00:30:17] what is Lochia (postpartum bleeding)?

Keli Garza: [00:30:18] it's that happens after you, you have a baby. So when maybe use or women have to wear menstrual pads because there's blood and other that's mattered so and so and so so that's referred to as lochia. So lochia is it's common for it to last for 4 to 6 weeks. When I was doing the postpartum steaming, when I did the first steam, there was lochia that actually came out into the pot and then the second day as well. So every day for the first couple of day, for the first few, Steams lochia was coming out.

Keli Garza: [00:30:53] But after that, there was no more lochia coming out. And and then I still did see some spotting of lochia for a couple of days. And then after the fifth steam, I didn't have any lochia anymore at all. So. So I think that what's happening is you pull that, look you out of there, and then the uterus is able to go back to its size as well as I think that the herbs are helpful in getting that to go back down to its size. And then also all the circulation that comes to the area, you know, is also, you know, providing that that therapy.

Keli Garza: [00:31:25] And so and then in addition to that, I had a really bad swelling and I had really bad swelling. So I wasn't even able to identify my body after I gave birth. Like, I just didn't even know what was what. And I did have prolapse my my cervix was all the way down almost coming out. And that steaming alone was able to, within a week, push everything back up into its place. So I never ended up having any incontinence, any bladder incontinence, because if all the organs go back into place, I don't know everything that goes into bladder incontinence, but having all of the organs in place is going to be important to preventing that from becoming a problem. And so I have worked with with women who have had bladder incontinence and after doing steaming, they've been able to resolve the problem entirely. And this is not even just postpartum, but they've had the problems since after giving birth, and then they were able to resolve the problem years later. And one thing that I did notice is that these women all all had prolapse was an issue.

Esther Gallagher: [00:32:36] I'm curious, Keli, it just occurred to me to ask whether you think that there's a hormonal component to the herbs and how they're accomplishing the work that they're doing in the body.

Keli Garza: [00:32:55] You know, that's a really good question and one that I definitely want to research further. I recently was doing some research about using vaginal steaming to recovery to recover from sexual trauma. And there's somebody who I work with, my colleague Marcia Lopez, and I actually learned about vaginal steaming from Marcia. And she's very cutting edge. She uses vaginal steaming for recovery from sexual trauma. And so she is the one that mentioned she said, you know, steaming affects the vagus nerve. It stimulates the vagus nerve.

Keli Garza: [00:33:37] So, you know, I was doing some research to write this article. And so I was looking into it. I was like, okay, so the vagus nerve. It's like, how does this work? And so what I found out is that the vagus nerve is a nerve that stretches throughout our body, and that when that nerve is stimulated, it can put the body into a fight or flight response. And that in order to and that it's also if it's stimulated, it can help to send the body into a relaxed state of trust and love. And the way that it can send the body into the relaxed state is because the nerve, when stimulated, can release oxytocin.

Keli Garza: [00:34:22] So all of this is very interesting. Oxytocin, that's one of the hormones, Right. So now how does the nerve release oxytocin? So I really do need to research this more. I'm not I'm absolutely not an expert in this area. But the nerve I believe, is mainly in the brain. And it has neurotransmitters that go down to the stomach and to other and throughout other parts of the body. So, for example, when somebody is nervous and they get butterflies in the stomach, this vagus nerve is the one that's responsible. Yeah, exactly. Exactly. So then I was like, So how so How does vaginal steaming stimulate it? As as Lopez had suggested, found a study by the north north Eastern Medical University, I believe in Ohio.

Keli Garza: [00:35:10] And I'll have to send you guys any corrections to this if I'm if I'm getting any of this wrong. There was a study study in 1999 they where they discovered that there are inputs that communicate directly to the vagus nerve that are along the vaginal canal in the cervix and along the uterine walls. There are inputs that communicate directly to the vagus nerve. So those so when those areas are stimulated,

it sends neurotransmitters directly up to the brain that can be responsible for releasing oxytocin.

Keli Garza: [00:35:48] So when you put all of that together, you guys are following Me, doing a vaginal steam, that touch that, you know, that, that where the steam absolutely goes into the vaginal canal and touches the bottom of the cervix. Doing a vaginal steam is stimulating the vagus nerve, which can release oxytocin directly. And so oxytocin, we know, is responsible for a mother, a mother's feelings of love and attachment to her baby. And then it's also involved in breast milk production. So now all of this has a lot of implications and it needs to be studied further. But it's pretty exciting. And one of the.

Esther Gallagher: [00:36:31] Well, and oxytocin is the the hormone that contracts the uterus. So just to add in that thing, but also oxytocin works that way in everyone, not just mothers.

Keli Garza: [00:36:45] Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Esther Gallagher: [00:36:47] That connection and bonding happens in the presence of oxytocin. So and it's it is also typically I don't think it's going too far off the rails to say that oxytocin is an anti anxiety hormone. So you mentioned fight or flight and flight there's also there's a third vagus nerve response or just trauma response, which is freeze, which is what women typically do. We don't we don't flee and we don't fight. We freeze during stressful circumstances and then we hold the trauma in our bodies. So medically and so doing something that addresses that whole central nervous system of trauma response would potentially be very highly effective.

Keli Garza: [00:37:52] Thank you so much for talking more about that. And that's what I said. I'm not I need to learn more about it. It's just so interesting that it might be able to stimulate that directly. And, you know, one of the side effects that I always hear and that that I've noticed myself with vaginal steaming is women reports feeling very relaxed. Afterwards. The women say, Oh, it's so relaxing. I love doing it. I don't know if it's helping with my cramps, but it's just so relaxing.

Keli Garza: [00:38:21] That's usually one of the first things that women report. And then another thing that women report is also feeling aroused that they that they're that their libido gets stimulated and that they feel like that they are having more pleasure, you know, when they have a sexual experience after vaginal steaming. And so those are all things that I also understand that oxytocin is going to be a factor.

Esther Gallagher: [00:38:51] Right. All of these things are also stimulated by breastfeeding, by the way, like all of these things. So, you know, so it's it's a wonderful kind of tandem relationship. And as you're talking about all this, I realize that the sitz bath that I do for my moms essentially accomplish a very similar thing. The only difference is they're not in a squatting position. They're in a they're in a relaxed back position.

Keli Garza: [00:39:19] Sitz bath. Sitz bath are incredible. So hard to say. Sitz bath are great. And but there is one big difference between a sitz bath and a vaginal steam. The sitz bath only touches what it touches because the the the water in that case is not in a steaming state. But when a woman is doing the vaginal steaming, the steam is rising. And so the steam will actually at first the steam is just hitting the perineal area. But after a couple of minutes, you actually can feel the vaginal canal open and you feel it ascend the vaginal canal. So the steam is able to again, water in the form of steam is able to reach water with water because, you know, especially for a postpartum mother where the cervix is open, that steam is actually able to go up into the uterus as long as that cervix is open. So so steam, so sitz bath are wonderful. And the added benefit of doing the steaming is that the steam is able to get further as far as getting up into the reproductive organs.

Sarah Trott: [00:40:28] On a practical note, how hot is this stuff? Should I be worried? Am I going to get burned?

Keli Garza: [00:40:34] Yeah, it's really important to make sure that it's comfortable. Just like for a nice sitz bath, you would make sure that it was a comfortable temperature for the vaginal steam. It would also need to be a comfortable temperature. So, you know,

just test the heat beforehand and just just like how you would if you're getting into a shower or a bath, just test it beforehand and make sure that it's comfortable.

Keli Garza: [00:40:55] There is no benefit to it burning you, you know, like you don't get more clean in A shower if it's scalding hot, you know, you don't you don't have more benefit with the vaginal steam. If it's scalding, it's just make sure that it's a mild comfortable temperature and that's what's going to be best.

Sarah Trott: [00:41:11] Okay. And so tell us more about the practicalities here. Like, I'm sure lots of our listeners are hugely interested now in trying this out and making sure that they have the right gear and the right setup. Like I'm sure safety and cleanliness is of the utmost importance. You have these products available. Where can they find them? I know we have some special offer for our listeners as well that I want everyone to take advantage of. Tell us more about the product itself and how how someone could get one so that they they aren't trying to use something inappropriate.

Keli Garza: [00:41:45] Gotcha. So I make vaginal steam honest and it's basically it's going to be like a wooden box seat and it's got a hole in the top and inside there's going to be a pot. And my package comes with ten packets of herbs, which is enough for ten steam sessions or even 20. If you want to reuse the herbs you can. So the entire vaginal steam sauna package is available on <https://steamychick.institute/>. And I have a special offer for the fourth trimester listeners, which is that if you want to use the coupon code for trimester, then you will have free shipping for the vaginal steam sauna and you know you can do home setups, but they're not always very comfortable. And there are situations where, where it's, you know, women don't really put together something that that works very well.

Keli Garza: [00:42:44] So I do think it's a good idea to invest in the setup. And as far as my company goes, after I did my post partum steam, one of my friends came over to visit me and the baby and she said, Keli What is that? Which chair in the corner? So I was like, Oh, that's my vaginal steam sauna. And she started to tell everybody about it, and that's how I started selling them. And and I was, you know, at home with my baby.

And I was getting these phone calls from people and these text messages from everywhere that wanted these vaginal steam saunas.

Keli Garza: [00:43:17] And I was like, Why? Why is everybody Coming to me for this? And I discovered that there's nowhere that you can buy vaginal steam saunas in the United States. There's nobody that makes them. So I did find that if you're in South Korea, you could buy them. And I think they have some in Indonesia as well. But in the United States, nobody makes them. And so I was like, okay, so this is why everybody's trying to, you know, trying to get them from me.

Keli Garza: [00:43:41] And so I started making them when I was at home with my baby and I founded the company Steamy Chick. And so we're the I'm the first manufacturer of vaginal steam sauna. In the United States. And now and now there are a couple more companies, but I'm still the largest. Last month we sold 75. Vaginal steam soreness. So it's getting yeah, it's getting bigger and bigger and it's really exciting. And we have everything that you would need, including courses for doulas and midwives and other birth workers that are interested in learning more about vaginal steaming and offering it to their clients. Yeah.

Esther Gallagher: [00:44:19] That's very exciting. Maybe we'll have you come to our doula group, do a little, little talk. So. Here's a question that harkens back to the pre practicalities and business portion. I'm a grandmother. Who's also post menopausal. And there were definitely interesting and profound changes to my whole physiology. And having gone through the post through the menopausal change, do you know of uses? For women beyond the postpartum period. You touched on that a little bit. But I just like you to say another paragraph about once you've given birth, had your baby made your recovery. If you're still having periods, you could be doing this once a month or if any issues crop up. It sounds like this is a lifelong investment potentially, Am I correct?

Keli Garza: [00:45:34] Yeah. Vaginal steaming is good at all different stages of a woman's life. So I think, you know, going back to the beginning, when a woman first has her period, when a girl first has her period, you know, at the monarch, that's a really

important time for a woman, for a girl, for us to teach a girl about vaginal steaming and to do a vaginal steam after her first period. That way she knows any time she ever has any problems arise, she could use it. So it could also be used in case there are menstrual cramps or any disorders that arise, such as fibroids, cysts or endometriosis. I've worked with hundreds of women and there are dozens of case studies of women that have healed their fibroids, their ovarian cysts, their Barthelins, or their fibroids with vaginal steaming. So it's incredible to, as a first level, to be able to address any issues that arise.

Keli Garza: [00:46:26] There have also been cases of HPV that have disappeared and even cases of cervical cancer, which is like, you know, it's it's incredible. We don't know if it was the steaming that caused it to go away, but they went it went away. And these are the two cases where that has happened. And so so then, you know, postpartum, of course, is great for fertility. It's wonderful when women are having difficulty conceiving if there's any brown or black old residue at the beginning or end of the period, if there are any clots, then that might be a sign that the woman hasn't been getting her full uterine cleanse during her period and there might be old residue in there. And that can become an issue for for the fetus to implant and for the pregnancy to carry out and be successful. So if there's any old residue in there or black or brown blood, then that would be a good time for a woman to steam for her fertility purposes.

Keli Garza: [00:47:21] And then, of course, we talked in depth about postpartum, and then we get to our our menopause and post menopause. So the first woman that I saw, the vaginal steams on it, too, she was in her forties, and she all of a sudden was having these heavy periods that were ten days long with huge clots. And, you know, along with all of it, came really bad cramps and headaches. And so I was listening to her and she said that these periods dated back to her last birth, which was, you know, I think it had been about four years. So I was thinking about it. I said, you know, it sounds like you didn't get it sounds like there's a lot of old residue in there. And perhaps if you get all that old residue out, it will get rid of the cramps, which was my thought.

Keli Garza: [00:48:08] She did her steaming before her period. She steamed for three nights in a row and her next period was only five days long with only medium flow. She

didn't have that heavy flow anymore and she still had clots, but she actually had more clots than she had ever had before. Well, her very next period was completely clean. There was no clots in there. So what had what really happens is when a woman does the first steaming, it pulls out all of that old residue and she gets a cleanse. And then the second and third period will usually be entirely clean. And so this woman, you know, she had been told by her doctor and her friends and her neighbors, that's just what you're going to have to go through.

Esther Gallagher: [00:48:51] And don't get me started, Keli.

Keli Garza: [00:48:55] And she was able to do something to help it. So that was really great.

Esther Gallagher: [00:49:00] So fantastic. I love that.

Keli Garza: [00:49:01] Yeah. And so she was a she was a birth Educator, and so she started to just tell everybody about it. And really, I have to credit her with the whole reason why I have a successful company now, because She just couldn't stop telling people about her experience With vaginal steaming. And then all of her, everybody was coming to me to to buy their own steam sauna.

Keli Garza: [00:49:20] And I was like, No, you can just use hers. And they're like, No, no, I want my own, you know? So that's that's why I have a company, you know. But anyhow, so that's one of the issues that women do face during menopause and that they don't get very much help with. And it it really concerns me and bothers me that women aren't getting help, that heavy bleeding is dangerous for the body. You know, that's not a normal period and that's not what a woman has to live through for. And some sometimes women are being told that that's just what they're going to have to deal with for ten years, you know, And that's just it's just, you know, it's unfortunate.

Keli Garza: [00:49:56] So vaginal steaming has been has shown success in that. And I use herbs in my blends that help to regulate bleeding, that help to reduce heavy bleeding. And I believe that those are important in that. But I also think it's just the

matter of residue, because what happens is happens is the arteries are trying to flush the uterus clean. They're like, oh, there's there's gunk in there. Just send some more blood, flush it out, because the blood is actually a flushing agent. And so once you can get that old residue out of there, the the. He is no longer sending the signal that it needs to flush more. And also the cramps are the same thing. The cramps are happening because the uterus is like something stuck. Let me contract and help it to come out, you know? And so both of those things will go away once that old residue is cleared out, which is huge.

Keli Garza: [00:50:45] So now let's get on to post menopause after a woman is no longer having her period. Sometimes women have phantom period symptoms. They report that it's like they get their period every month. They get the swollen breasts, they can get cramping and they get emotional. But then there's just no period. And so some women report that for phantom cramping. Absolutely. When a woman finished her period, there was old residue left in there. So her so her body is still trying to send a cleanse that the uterus or send a message that her uterus needs a cleanse and and the uterus is still cramping and trying to get out.

Keli Garza: [00:51:22] So all of the women with phantom period symptoms that have done vaginal steaming have been able to get rid of those phantom period symptoms for good. So that's that's great. And so some of these women, you know, again, they haven't had period and 1020 years some of them but they'll steam and and and brown stuff comes out or clots come out and then after that stuff comes out. They're good. So it's been it's been really good because, again, those women aren't getting much help. They are told that they could do a hysterectomy if they don't want those issues anymore, which is a pretty serious procedure. You know, just to get rid of some cramping, you know what I mean?

Esther Gallagher: [00:52:01] It's a very serious procedure and it takes a very long time to recover from.

Keli Garza: [00:52:07] Yeah. And doctors don't always tell that to women. They don't always they don't always mention how how serious it is. And so some women do it because that's the only option.

Keli Garza: [00:52:17] Also, post menopause, women Still get infections. And that's something that I haven't really talked about. Vaginal steaming helps to get rid of bacterial vaginosis and yeast infections so it can help with the woman that is post menopause as well. And then also, I haven't studied UTIs too much, but I have heard a lot of reports from my customers that it's resolved their duties as well.

Esther Gallagher: [00:52:41] If it has the effect. Sorry, just to interrupt again, if it has the effect of helping moisturize and reinforce vaginal tissue so that it's more sturdy and healthy and it has a hormonal effect that also reinforces that, then for post menopausal women who, for instance, are still having sex, that's going to be more comfortable. That urethra is not going to be as irritable if there's a kind of just a baseline level of tissue health supporting around there. And I'm just thinking that the possibility because, you know, the incontinence is a hormonal issue often. And so if if you're using a blend that helps support the work that the the ovaries just aren't doing any more, then you're helping the body with this. So that that makes me wonder.

Esther Gallagher: [00:53:55] Keli, just I have one last question, and I know we're going to need to wrap up pretty soon. But it sounds like and you mentioned this very early on, but I wanted to come back around to it. It sounds like depending on the issue a woman might be experiencing, she may want to be working with different herbal blends. And what's your recommendation for a woman who might be you know, I mean, I know you could probably get a one size fits all blend and use it once a month, and that sounds great. But what if a woman thought, well, gee, I'm I'm really working with a chronic condition or what's become chronic incontinence, maybe I, I need to be working with specific set of herbs. Is that possible?

Keli Garza: [00:54:52] Yeah. Yeah. For incontinence, the best herbs that I would recommend are the steamy cheek gentle herbs, because they have really again, they're going to help to to get all of the the organs back into place and to tighten everything up

and that can be really useful for incontinence. Then for my post Menopause women, I have a blend, I call them my hot chicks.

Keli Garza: [00:55:13] I call it. I call my sister the hot chicks. Yeah And I have a cooling herb blend to keep them Cool because often That heat and that dryness becomes an issue and it makes sex painful. And so the cooling herbs are the ones for the the post menopause. And then and they I'll just warn anybody who's post-menopausal it wakes up the libido like a lion. This is what the women have reported back. And then for postpartum, let's get back to our postpartum moms.

Keli Garza: [00:55:45] The best blend are the cleansing herbs, because they're going to disinfect any tares and they're going to help to clean out the uterus as quickly as possible.

Sarah Trott: [00:55:53] I love this information. I've learned so much and I just wish I knew about this sooner. My goodness. Oh, it's such a neat thing. I'm going to start doing it. I hope all of our listeners start doing it. Definitely. You know, order your steam sauna, use the code, fourthtrimester, all one word and get free shipping. That's such a nice offer. Thank you so much, Keli, for giving that to our listeners as an exclusive offer. And I have to just say, I was in Las Vegas last weekend and I was talking about this upcoming episode.

Esther Gallagher: [00:56:28] But what stays in Las Vegas?

Keli Garza: [00:56:30] Yeah, exactly.

Sarah Trott: [00:56:30] Here's something that came back from Las Vegas. I was talking to this couple and they're just laughing like they're like vaginal steaming. That sounds so interesting and cool and blah, blah, blah. But she said, like, men did men do this. I said, Oh, I don't think so, but I have to. I'm just going to pass on the question.

Keli Garza: [00:56:49] OK yeah, I have heard that men do it, but I myself have never been able to get a man to do it. So they're just not interested. They say they just make

all kinds of jokes there, like, am I going to get a vagina if I do this? Blah, blah, blah, You know, Oh my God.

Keli Garza: [00:57:07] The reality is that because men suffer from hemorrhoids, that it can help with hemorrhoids. And then also I heard a claim in in Korea, I was looking at this. They have this vaginal steam sauna made out of red clay with infrared lights cost like \$1,000. But I was I was looking at it And specifically on the product, you know, like user guide, it was saying that men and women have used it to to heal colon cancer or to treat colon cancer. Wow. Yeah. You know, and they're like a little bit less like they probably don't have as many laws as we do in this country about being able to claim whether or not something cures cancer But specifically, they said it cures colon colon cancer.

Esther Gallagher: [00:57:55] Well. And think about prostate. Yes. Yes, Hello.

Keli Garza: [00:58:00] Yes.

Esther Gallagher: [00:58:01] I mean, that's the prostate is right above the perineum in men, right. Like if you were right to massage their perineum, you're basically massaging into the prostate. I think just getting men to squat.

Keli Garza: [00:58:18] Would be helpful.

Esther Gallagher: [00:58:19] Let alone once a month would be great. But just think how. Just think like every month when you're having your period, you know, you could have a little steamy session together where you just sit and chat and, you know, Wouldn't that be good? Wouldn't that just change our relationships, at least heterosexual ones a lot?

Sarah Trott: [00:58:46] Oh, my gosh. You could do a little spot. You could do a mud mask while you're sitting there. Chit chat.

Esther Gallagher: [00:58:51] Yes. You could do each other's toenails. Oh, my gosh. So it'd be great.

Sarah Trott: [00:58:58] Steamy. Go order your sauna. Order one for your friend who's expecting a baby. My parents ordered one for your daughters and your sons at this point. That sounds like a really fun thing for men, too. So we're all about it. Thank you so much, Keli, for being a guest on our program.

Keli Garza: [00:59:20] Yes. Thank you So much for having me, ladies.

Sarah Trott: [00:59:22] We loved it. Thank you so much.

Esther Gallagher: [00:59:23] Thank you.

Sarah Trott: You can find out more about Esther Gallagher on <http://www.esthergallagher.com/>. You can also subscribe to this podcast in order to hear more from us. [Click here for iTunes](#) and [click here for Google Podcasts](#). Thank you for listening everyone and I hope you'll join us next time on the Fourth Trimester. The theme music on this podcast was created by Sean Trott. Hear more at <https://soundcloud.com/seantrott>. Special thanks to my true loves: my husband Ben, daughter Penelope, and baby girl Evelyn. Don't forget to share the Fourth Trimester Podcast with any new and expecting parents. I'm Sarah Trott. Goodbye for now.