

Sex During Pregnancy

In this discussion of sex during pregnancy you will learn about how pregnancy may affect your feelings about sex and about the safety of having sex during pregnancy.

In a normal pregnancy, sexual intercourse is usually safe for you and the baby. It is very rare for sex to cause loss of a baby (miscarriage). If you do not have a history or signs of miscarriage or premature labor, it's usually fine to have sex. However, when you reach your ninth month, ask your healthcare provider about this. If you have questions about your form of sexual expression, ask your provider.

Changes in Sexuality

It is perfectly normal for the feelings you and your partner have about sex to change during your pregnancy. At times your desire for sex may increase. You may find that pregnancy makes you feel closer to your partner and more interested in sex. At other times changes in your body and life as a result of the pregnancy may decrease your interest in sex. Your ability to have an orgasm may change.

Various factors during the different phases of pregnancy can affect sexual desire:

- During the first 3 months of pregnancy, you may have very tender breasts, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, and fears of miscarriage. These things may lessen your interest in sex.
- In the second trimester, many women find they are more interested in sex. Nausea, fatigue, and fears of miscarriage are usually over. The increased blood supply to the pelvic area may make you feel more sexually aroused.
- During the last 3 months, you or your partner may feel awkward about your big abdomen. Some women may feel unattractive. You may worry that sex will harm the baby. Occasionally, husbands may resent all the attention their wives give to preparation for the birth. Any of these things may decrease your interest in sex.

Make sure that you and your partner share your feelings with each other. Many women find that they need more affection, closeness, and tenderness during pregnancy. Intercourse is not the only way you can have physical closeness. Touching, kissing, and holding can be satisfying and tender ways to show love and affection.

Different Positions

As your abdomen becomes large, sex may become uncomfortable. During the last few months avoid having a lot of pressure on the abdomen. Also, deep penetration of the penis during sex may be painful. Try the following positions for greater comfort:

- Woman on top
- The man facing the woman's back

- Lying side by side

Limitations

In some cases your healthcare provider may advise you to limit or avoid sex during pregnancy. For example, you may be advised to avoid sex if you have:

- A history or threat of miscarriage, premature labor, or premature delivery (before 37 weeks)
- Cramps or vaginal bleeding
- Infection
- Pain with intercourse
- Leaking fluid or breaking of the bag of water
- Complications with the pregnancy, such as placenta previa

Many pregnant women feel some brief cramping after sex. You may also have some light bleeding or spotting. Cramping or spotting should stop soon after you get off your feet and rest. Call your healthcare provider if:

- The cramps or bleeding get worse or do not stop.
- You have heavier bleeding, more like a period.
- You think you have broken your bag of water.

In these cases, do not have sex again until you have seen your healthcare provider.

Precautions

If you have oral sex, remember that air should not be blown into the vagina. This can cause an air bubble to get into your bloodstream, which could be fatal to you and your baby.

Whatever form of sexual expression you choose, it is important to have just 1 sexual partner who is not sexually active with anyone else. Women who have more than 1 sexual partner have a greater risk of getting an infection. Sexually transmitted infections are dangerous for both you and your baby.

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