



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 sexual relations during pregnancy. Sexual relations may include cuddling, intercourse, oral sex, manual stimulation, and masturbation.

In normal pregnancy without complications, sexual intercourse is safe and will not harm you or the baby. It is rare for intercourse to cause miscarriage. If you do not have a history or signs of miscarriage or premature labor, you may continue to have intercourse until your due date. However, when you reach your ninth month, ask your doctor if you and your partner may continue sexual relations before the birth of the baby. If you have questions about your form of sexual expression, ask your doctor.

Changes in Sexuality

It is perfectly normal for your feelings and your partner's feelings about sex to change during pregnancy. At times your desires for sex may increase. At other times one or both of you may feel less interested in sex. There is no common pattern for when couples feel more or less interested in sex. However, there are some factors during different phases of pregnancy that can influence sexual desire:

- During their first trimester many women notice a decrease in their sexual interest. This may be related to extreme tenderness of the breast, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, and fears of miscarriage. For some couples, knowledge of the pregnancy increases the closeness and sexual desire they feel.
- In the second trimester, many women have an increase in interest in sex. Nausea, fatigue, and fears of miscarriage are usually over. Another possible explanation is the increased blood supply to the pelvic area, which can mimic sexual arousal.

- During the third trimester, either partner may feel awkward about the women's enlarged abdomen. Some women may feel unattractive because of the physical changes of late pregnancy. Parents 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 factors may decrease sexual desire. However, it is also possible to feel special closeness and excitement that increase sexual desire.

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 form of sexual expression. Other forms of intimacy can be equally satisfying.

Different Positions

As your pregnancy progresses and your abdomen becomes large, sex may become uncomfortable. During the last few months avoid excessive pressure on your abdomen. Also, deep penetration of your partner's penis may be painful. Try the following positions for greater comfort:

- Women on top
- Rear entry position
- Facing each other while lying on your sides

Limitations

There are some conditions under which your doctor may advise to limit or avoid sex during your pregnancy. These conditions include:

- A history of miscarriage, premature labor, or premature delivery
- Cramps or bleeding
- Infection
- Pain with intercourse
- Leaking fluid or breaking of your water bag

Many pregnant women feel some brief abdominal cramping after intercourse. Contact your doctor if the cramping worsens or continues with rest one hour after intercourse. It should always be painless (that is, less painful than the cramps you feel during menstruation). The bleeding should stop soon after you rest off your feet. If the bleeding does not stop, call your doctor. Call your doctor any time you think you have broken your bag of water. You should stop having intercourse until you have been checked by your doctor.

Precautions

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

Whatever form of sexual expression you choose, it is important to have only one partner. Women who have more than one sexual partner have a greater risk of getting a sexually transmitted disease. These diseases are dangerous for both you and your baby.

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