

Sex During Pregnancy

These days, people talk about sex more easily than ever before. However, people are sometimes embarrassed to talk about sex and pregnancy and may have trouble bringing up questions about sex with their doctor or nurse. Also, women and men often keep their fears and feelings to themselves.

If this is your first child, you may not know that pregnancy may be a time of mood swings for you and the father of the baby. You may feel tired, excited, happy, depressed, hopeful, scared, motherly, beautiful, uncomfortable and unattractive. The father, on the other hand, may feel proud at having fathered a child or may be anxious about new responsibilities. He may feel protective toward you and the growing baby or jealous of your new concentration on the pregnancy.

These mood changes may affect how you feel about each other and your desire for sex. The most important thing is not what you feel or how silly you think it is, but **sharing those feelings with each other**. In this way, you can make changes to make your sexual relationship good for both of you.

Following are some answers to questions about sex that commonly trouble expectant couples. If you have further questions, or if you have a sexual problem during your pregnancy that cannot be solved by yourselves, ask your doctor or nurse for advice. Although, you may think your question is unique, other people have probably had the same concern.

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Learn more about your health care.

Questions that Trouble Pregnant Women

- **Will my desire for sex be less during pregnancy?**

No two women feel the same way during pregnancy. For most women, pregnancy does not change their interest in sex. For some women, birth control was an interruption, and pregnancy may be a period of freedom. At certain times, some women may feel they are "losing their figure and looks" during pregnancy. Some may shy away from lovemaking, feeling less desirable. Others may want sex as reassurance that their partner still loves them and finds them attractive.

If you have no interest in having sex, talk with your partner. It may be hard for your partner to understand. If you and your partner disagree about sex or you feel pressured to have sex, talk to your doctor, nurse or a mental health counselor.

- **Can sex harm the baby?**

It is almost impossible to harm the baby in the uterus by having sex. The water that the baby floats in, the membranes that hold the water, the womb, the abdominal wall and the bony pelvis serve to protect the baby from being hurt.

If having sex is uncomfortable or painful, talk to your doctor or nurse. Sex during pregnancy is not usually painful. Do not put any sex toys or objects in your vagina or rectum during pregnancy.

- **Is it harmful to have a climax (orgasm) during pregnancy?**

Orgasm is not harmful to your baby.

- **How often is it safe to have sex during pregnancy?**

How often you have sex will not affect you or your baby, unless you have high risk problems and you have been told not to have sex. Couples make love at different rates and even vary from month to month. Some women are not interested in sex during the first three months of pregnancy. This may be due to tiredness and changes in hormones. These feelings often change after the first trimester when a desire for sex and increased energy may take place.

- **Can I have sex any time during pregnancy?**

Sex is usually allowed throughout pregnancy until the last few weeks. Some doctors feel that during the last few weeks, sex may cause premature rupture of the membranes. Many doctors have strong feelings about the answer to this question. It is best for you to follow your own doctor's advice.

Sex should be stopped and you should call your doctor if:

- ▶ Your water leaks or bag of water breaks.
- ▶ You have vaginal bleeding, itching or discharge.
- ▶ You feel pain in the vagina or abdomen.
- ▶ You have tightening in your uterus, contractions or premature labor.

- **If I have a history of miscarriages, can I still have sex?**

If you have had miscarriages, you should not have sex for the first three months of your pregnancy. Your doctor will probably tell you not to take bumpy car rides or take part in major physical activity or exercise. These restrictions help the placenta (afterbirth) develop enough for a successful pregnancy to occur.

- **What should I do if the pressure during sex makes me uncomfortable but I do not have pain?**

If your partner's weight causes your discomfort, position changes will help. For instance, your partner may kneel over you, or approach you from the side or back, or you may sit on top of him.

If you feel pressure inside, do not allow your partner to move deeply into you. Pillows under you or lying on your side may help. Using a vaginal cream or jelly, like K-Y jelly or Lubafax, also may help.

- **What if I find it very difficult to talk to my partner about the way I feel? I feel ugly and undesirable. My partner never tells me otherwise and he does not cuddle me.**

Occasionally, some men are physically "turned off" during their partner's pregnancy. Usually this feeling is only temporary, and it should not be seen as a rejection. Your partner may have some other concerns and mixed feelings about this pregnancy, which

may make him act indifferent and less caring. You also may be so involved with the life inside you that he may feel you are not interested in him. Talk to each other about these feelings.

Questions that Trouble Expectant Fathers

- **I have a need for sex, but since the pregnancy my partner is not interested in sex. This causes tension between us. What can we do?**

Some form of compromise is the best solution. Talk about the problems and your feelings. Having sex less often or finding pleasure in a way that requires less complete participation on her part may be a solution.

It is sometimes hard for a woman to feel interested in sex when she does not feel desirable. Tell her that she is still attractive and loved despite her bulging belly. This may increase her interest in sex.

- **When I feel the baby moving while we are making love, it puts an end to my interest in sex. What should I do?**

You may be worried that you might hurt the baby. The baby is well protected and the kicks and turns have nothing to do with your sexual activity. The baby's kicking may remind you of your partner's role as a mother. You may feel as if a third person is observing your sexual activity. It may help to try another position so you do not feel the baby move.

- **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**