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Sex AFTER CHILDBIRTH



SEX AFTER CHILDBIRTH

Common Questions

When can I have sex?

Most health care providers suggest that couples wait until the 4 - 6 week postpartum check-up to resume sexual intercourse. Speak to your doctor before resuming sexual activity.

Choose to have sexual intercourse when:

- Vaginal flow has changed to clear/white mucous or has stopped (even with C-Section).
- Episiotomy/tearing/abdominal scars are healed.
- Both partners feel physically and emotionally ready.

Can I get pregnant?

You may be able to get pregnant before your period returns. Speak with your doctor about family planning and birth control options.

Menstruation may return:

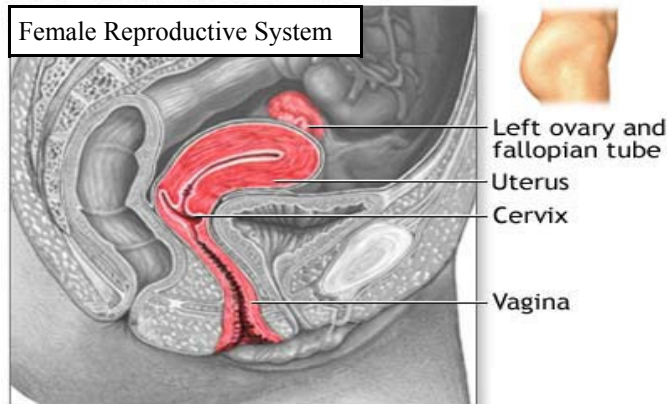
- 2-18 months after delivery for breastfeeding mothers
- 6-8 weeks after delivery for non-breastfeeding mothers

It is possible to get pregnant while breastfeeding. Speak with your doctor about family planning.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

Physical changes after childbirth:

- Cervix closes by the end of second week.
- Vagina returns to pre-pregnancy size within 6-8 weeks.
- Uterus returns to pre-pregnancy size within 4-6 weeks.
- Cesarean healing may last 8 weeks.
- Pain/sensitivity from episiotomy and from other trauma from labour may last 6 weeks or longer.
- Decreased vaginal lubrication up to 6 months.
- Leaking breastmilk may occur during intercourse.
- Fatigue from labour and/or caring for newborn.



Source: American Accreditation Health Care Commission www.urac.org

Common emotions after childbirth:

- Fear of pain, pregnancy, or tissue damage related to intercourse.
- Lack of desire for sex for a few weeks after delivery up to a year.
- Stress from changes in daily routines and additional responsibilities/roles.
- Woman may not feel attractive.
- Role confusion: e.g., man may temporarily view partner only in maternal role.
- Woman may experience feelings similar to sexual arousal during breastfeeding.

BRINGING ROMANCE BACK

Helpful steps to consider:

1. Start re-discovering pleasure of touch in a non-sexual way (e.g., washing partner).
2. Touch in a more sexual way from least intimate body part to most intimate but avoid genital area (e.g., massage).
3. Continue cuddling, kissing, and closeness until you are ready for sexual activity.
4. Begin gentle stimulation of the genitals.
5. Gradual penetration via sexual intercourse.

Helpful Tips:

- Communicate feelings/needs to partner.
- Use water-based gel (e.g., K.Y. Jelly) or spermicide for lubrication.
- Plan sexual activities after infant's feeding (if breastfeeding) to reduce leaking breastmilk.
- Wear a bra with liners during sexual intercourse to reduce leaking breastmilk.
- Try different positions during intercourse to maximize comfort.
- Make sex a priority by setting aside time with partner.

Helpful Reminders:

- Female reaction to sexual stimulation may not be as intense or as fast for up to 3 months after childbirth.
- Kegel exercises strengthen pelvic floor and vaginal muscles.
- Speak with your doctor about sitz baths to increase comfort during postpartum period.
- Speak with your doctor if sexual intercourse remains uncomfortable beyond two months after childbirth.