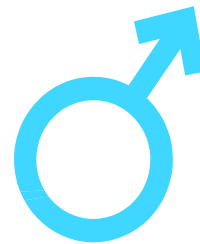




## Sex in pregnancy



Changes in sex drive are normal in pregnancy, both for you & your partner. You may feel less like sex if you're tired, nauseous or uncomfortable, or you may want more than normal: extra vaginal lubrication often makes orgasm easier. Some men adore the sight of their pregnant partner, while others find it a big "turn off". Find time & opportunity to be together - it's not necessary to have full penetrative sex if you don't feel like it – just enjoy kissing, cuddling & mutual masturbation. If you do want sex, your baby is protected by the bag of waters & can't be harmed.

Massage each other before & during sex with grapeseed oil & 2 or 3 drops of relaxing essential oil, eg ylang ylang - this is safe in pregnancy but avoid getting the oils in your vagina. Add 4 drops of oil to your bath & take a dip together, but don't use aromatherapy oils if your waters have broken. Experiment with different positions during sex - if you're on top of your partner, sitting astride him or on your side, pressure on your bump is reduced, whereas lying flat on your back for too long may make you feel faint. Oral sex isn't harmful but don't let your partner blow air in your vagina. Anal intercourse may cause infection & is probably best avoided in pregnancy; vibrators are safe if used carefully to avoid damaging your vagina or cervix or causing infection. A slight brownish-red blood loss sometimes occurs after sex & is not normally a problem but contact your midwife if you're worried. If you've previously had premature labour vigorous sex is best avoided; excessive nipple massage in mid-pregnancy may also trigger strong Braxton Hicks contractions. Try Bach flower remedies if you're anxious about sex in pregnancy - Rescue remedy, 4 drops neat on your tongue, is a good anti-stress remedy immediately before penetration, or olive or hornbeam, 2 drops in water, if you're feeling too tired. If your lack of desire for sex affects your relationship with your partner, talk to your midwife or consider hypnotherapy or counselling.

**Sex to start labour:** Sex can be a pleasant way to speed up the natural process of making you ready for labour, possibly helping to avoid induction, as it causes release in your cervix of hormones which trigger contractions. Semen also contains prostaglandins, another labour hormone. Nipple massage triggers oxytocin, the hormone which makes your uterus contract & if you reach orgasm mild contractions occur, which may start proper labour contractions – it's worth a try if you can manage it!

**Resuming sex after the birth:** You may not want full intercourse for several weeks due to your vaginal blood loss, bruising or stitches but it's wise to attempt some vaginal penetration before your postnatal examination with your midwife or GP, usually at about 6 weeks. Any difficulties you experience during sex may reveal stitches which have not fully dissolved or an unhealed part of your vagina or cervix. Don't forget to sort out contraception! And remember – you started as a couple & deserve to spend time together – ask family or friends to baby-sit occasionally.

Leaflet written by Denise Tiran, Expectancy's Director, and intended as a general guide only