

# SEXUAL ACTIVITY DURING PREGNANCY & POSTPARTUM

## IS ENGAGING IN SEXUAL ACTIVITY WHILE PREGNANT SAFE?

**Yes!** Most sexual activity is safe in pregnancy. This includes sexual intercourse or penetration with fingers or sex toys. The fetus is floating in amniotic fluid, which acts as a protective cushion for the developing baby. It can be normal to have some vaginal spotting after sex with penetration. In addition, orgasm can cause cramps. If you are experiencing heavy, persistent bleeding or severe cramps, see your health care provider.

## WHO SHOULD AVOID SEX WHILE PREGNANT?

Your doctor might advise you to abstain from penetrative sex while pregnant if you have any of the following:

- placenta previa
- cerclage or a cervix that is shortened
- vasa previa
- if you have gone into pre-term labour or your water has broken **during this pregnancy**
- vaginal bleeding during this pregnancy

## KEEP IN MIND...

It is normal for your sexual desire to change throughout your pregnancy. Some people want to engage in sex, while others do not, and that is okay. Often, during the first trimester, people are too tired or nauseous, but regain their interest in the second trimester, only for interest to fall again in the third trimester as their body physically changes. In addition, some positions you might be used to may feel uncomfortable as your belly grows. Sex during low-risk pregnancy **has not been shown to increase your risk of developing pregnancy complications, including pre-term labour or miscarriage.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS



Sex while pregnant is safe. Of course, it's your choice whether you feel like having sex.



Communicate your mood, wishes, and comfort to your partner throughout pregnancy.



Pregnancy **doesn't protect** against STIs. If high risk of contracting an STI (e.g., new partner), use barrier protection (e.g., condoms). STIs can cause problems for you and your baby.



Receiving oral sex carries a small, but serious, risk of an air embolism. Speak to your provider about recommendations.



Follow your doctor's advice if they advise you to abstain from sex.

## SEX DURING THE POSTPARTUM PERIOD

- Sexual intercourse can be resumed when it is comfortable, usually within 4-6 weeks after childbirth.
- **Vaginal dryness** can be normal after childbirth and during breastfeeding. Water-soluble lubricant or topical estrogen cream (prescribed by your physician) may ease discomfort.
- You may experience discomfort related to how a perineal tear that was repaired after delivery. For an examination, see your health care provider if you are worried about this.

### References

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Is it safe to have sex during pregnancy? [Internet]. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. 2021. Available from: <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/experts-and-stories/ask-acog/is-it-safe-to-have-sex-during-pregnancy>  
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