



## Sex During Pregnancy

Many women wonder whether it is safe to have sex during pregnancy. They worry about hurting the baby in some way or causing a miscarriage. The good news is that if the pregnancy is normal, it is perfectly safe to have sex throughout the pregnancy.

An unborn baby is fully protected by the amniotic sac and the muscular wall of the uterus. In addition, a thick plug of mucus seals off the cervix from the vagina. With these protections in place, your baby won't be harmed in any way by sexual intercourse.

Late in the pregnancy sex can help trigger the beginning of labor. Semen contains prostaglandin, a substance that helps soften the cervix in preparation for labor. In a normal, healthy pregnancy this can be a desirable benefit of sex as the due date approaches. However, some doctors advise women to abstain from sex during the final weeks of pregnancy for this very reason.

In some cases a doctor may recommend that a couple completely abstain from sex during pregnancy. Situations that might prompt this advice include:

- Previous miscarriage or current risks for miscarriage
- Previous pre-term labor or current risks for pre-term labor
- Carrying twins or triplets
- Placenta previa (a condition in which the placenta obstructs the cervical opening)
- Cramping, with or without vaginal bleeding or discharge
- Incompetent cervix (a weak cervix that is likely to open too soon)

Many women find that their desire for sex either increases or decreases during pregnancy. Either of these is perfectly normal. Some women feel freer because they don't have to worry about contraception. This sense of freedom, combined

with the hormonal surge of pregnancy, stimulates an increased desire for sex. Other women feel just the opposite. Tender breasts, nausea, weight gain, and exhaustion make sex seem unappealing. However you feel, it is important to discuss your feelings with your partner. Together you can find ways to deal with the changes pregnancy temporarily brings to your sexual relationship.

A few final words of caution:

- After the fourth month of pregnancy, don't lie flat on your back during sex. The baby's weight will place too much pressure on important blood vessels.
- If you have oral sex, don't allow your partner to blow air into your vagina. The air can create a blockage in a blood vessel. This is called an air embolism. It can be fatal for both you and your baby.
- During pregnancy never have sex with someone who has a sexually transmitted disease. Your baby could become infected and could be seriously harmed. Sexually transmitted diseases include HIV, chlamydia, herpes, genital warts, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis, and others. Talk to your doctor or your MedCost Prenatal Nurse if you need more information.

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