

Sex and Birth Control After Childbirth

When Can You Have Sex Again?

When to have sex again is a common concern for new parents. You should wait 6 weeks before having sex again. That is how long the uterus needs to return to its normal size.

It is important that you do not have sex while you are still bleeding because your risk of infection can be increased. It is also important to let any incisions heal.

Your hormone levels may take longer to return to normal, especially if you are breastfeeding.

How Will Sex Be Different?

When you and your partner are ready to have sexual activity, there may be some problems at first.

- You may have some discomfort during sex. This discomfort can last for weeks or months after your incision or tears have healed.
- Your vagina may feel drier than normal (especially if you are breastfeeding).
- You may feel too busy, anxious or tired while you adjust to the baby.
- You may be afraid of getting pregnant again. (You can ovulate before a true period starts.)

While you are waiting for your body to return to normal, you can use the following tips to help make sex more enjoyable.

- Use a water-soluble lubricant such as K-Y Jelly® until your hormone levels return to normal and you do not have vaginal dryness. Do not use Vaseline®, baby oil or mineral oil.

- Talk with your partner about your feelings or concerns. Do not be afraid to say what feels uncomfortable.
- If you are breastfeeding, you may have some milk let-down during sexual activity. It may help to breastfeed your baby before sex.
- Try to use sexual positions that put less pressure on your stomach and sore areas. If you are on top, you may have better control over movements that are uncomfortable.

Sex after birth does have benefits.

The hormones released during sexual activity will help your uterus return to its normal size.

What Methods of Birth Control Can You Use if You are Breastfeeding?

If you start having sex before your postpartum check-up, it is a good idea to use some form of birth control until you and your health care provider can talk about your options.

If you are breastfeeding, you should not use any combination birth control pills (that have both estrogen and progesterone), a vaginal ring or the patch. Breastfeeding in itself is not a totally reliable method of birth control.

Safe birth control options while breastfeeding are:

- condoms (male and female)
- spermicide creams, foam, jelly, film and suppository

(over)

- cervical cap
- diaphragm
- IUD (intrauterine device)
- progesterone-only birth control pills, which can begin 3 to 4 weeks after delivery
- shots of progesterone (Depo-Provera®), which can be given 4 to 6 weeks after delivery.

What Are Permanent Birth Control Methods?

If you do not plan to have children again want a more permanent (long-lasting) form of birth control, there are two options:

- vasectomy (surgery that blocks the vas deferens in a male)
- tubal ligation (surgery that blocks a woman's Fallopian tubes).

What If You Want to Get Pregnant Again Soon?

If you plan to have a baby again soon, you may want to avoid using the hormone methods of birth control.

That way you will not have to wait for your body to readjust to your normal hormone levels and menstrual cycle. This makes it easier to get pregnant.