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Sex after baby: Do's and don'ts of postpartum sex

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Elizabeth Weiss McGolerick

Wherever your libido stands after giving birth, before you jump back in the sack again there are some do's and don'ts you should familiarize yourself with so you know what to expect of postpartum sex.

TheSkinnyScoop.com, a site where moms survey other moms, asked their community the question, "How soon after your first child did you and your partner start having [sex](#) again?" 7 percent answered that they had sex again at one month, 50 percent at two months, 36 percent at three months, and 7 percent at six months or more.

Whether or not you fit into that 50 percent category, this stat brings us to our first postpartum sex "don't."

Don't compare yourself to other moms

Just as in pregnancy, every woman is different when it comes to postpartum sex. You can bet that your labor and delivery were unlike anyone else's, so it would follow that the rate at which you are ready for sex will differ as well. "We recommend no [sexual intercourse](#) until at least the six-week postpartum visit," says Randy Fink, MD, FACOG, medical director of the Miami Center of Excellence for Obstetrics and Gynecology. "In many cases the vagina and pelvis are still healing from delivery." But trust that your body will heal rapidly. "Fortunately, the vagina is an amazing organ and usually heals quickly and completely," says Fink.



Don't expect your libido to be at 100 percent

In light of sleep deprivation, fatigue, stress, pain, moods, hormones and an altered body image, it would follow that new moms are likely to have a low libido, says Fink. A new schedule can also have [intimacy](#) taking a back seat to everything else.

Get more tips here for jumpstarting your libido after baby is born.

But that doesn't mean your life has to be sexually stagnant...

Do practice "sensual intimacy"

The couples who are most successful at reintroducing quality sex into their lives are those who practice what Fink calls "sensual intimacy" during the immediate postpartum. Intimacy can mean simply being close together, doing things together and feeling a physical closeness. "The most important feature is that both partners are receptive to being close to one another and to sharing some physical intimacy without the 'goal' of penetration," he says. Engaging in love and companionship through snuggling, holding hands and kissing with the understanding that these actions won't lead to sex can make the transition back toward sexual intercourse easier. "Massage and sexual touching may be another option," says Fink. "Even though we recommend no penetration, there is nothing that says either partner can't enjoy an orgasm... or three."

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Get tips for the sex-starved dad here.

Once you get back to the bedroom...

Do prepare yourself for unexpected reactions from your body

"The hormonal changes associated with childbirth and lactation can lead to some unpleasant surprises if sex is started too early," says Fink. Conditions such as vaginal dryness, urinary leakage, weak muscles, pelvic pain and spontaneous breast leakage of milk during arousal are common as you resume your sexual habits with your partner.

So you know what to expect, read [Your Postpartum life: Things we'll tell you that no one else will](#).

But it's not all bad...

Do look forward to extra pleasure

For some women, "Orgasm may be easier to achieve in the postpartum, and multiple orgasms may be possible when they had not been before," says Fink. Now that's something to look forward to!

And, finally, remember that sex leads to babies...

Don't think you can't get pregnant again right away

"I cannot stress enough the importance of good birth control," says Fink. "Some women do come back to their postpartum visit pregnant!" He recommends starting a reliable [method of contraception](#) before returning to sexual activity. Breastfeeding does not automatically protect against pregnancy. And even if you're not back to a normal menstrual cycle, that doesn't mean pregnancy is impossible. "You don't know and cannot reliably tell if and when your ovary will release an egg," says Fink. "Breastfeeding is 96 percent effective in the first six months, provided that you are feeding every three hours. After that, all bets are off." Besides the fact that you may not want to be pregnant again so soon after giving birth, Fink explains that a short interval between pregnancies is a risk factor for delivering a baby with very low birth weight which can lead to multiple problems for the child.

Find out [here your birth control options after baby](#).

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