

WASHINGTON OB/GYN ASSOCIATES

95 Leonard Avenue
Building #1, Suite 300
Washington, PA 15301
724-225-3640 Phone

McMURRAY OB/GYN ASSOCIATES

2001 Waterdam Plaza
Suite 201
McMurray, PA 15317
724-942-5420 Phone

WASHINGTON OB/GYN ASSOCIATES

WAYNESBURG
343 East Roy Furman Highway
Suite 104
Waynesburg, PA 15370
724-627-7928 Phone

WASHINGTON OB/GYN ASSOCIATES

MON VALLEY-CHARLEROI
1200 McKean Avenue
Charleroi, PA 15022
724-483-1340 Phone

www.WashingtonObGyn.net

In this discussion of sex during pregnancy you will learn about how pregnancy may affect your feelings about sex and about the safety of having sex during pregnancy.

In a normal pregnancy, sexual intercourse is usually safe and will not harm you or the baby. It is very rare for sex to cause loss of a baby (miscarriage). If you do not have a history or signs of miscarriage or premature labor, you may be able to keep having sex until your due date. However, when you reach your ninth month, ask your healthcare provider about this. If you have questions about your form of sexual expression, ask your provider.

Changes in Sexuality

It is perfectly normal for the feelings you and your partner have about sex to change during your pregnancy. At times your desire for sex may increase. You may find that pregnancy makes you feel closer to your partner and more interested in sex. At other times changes in your body and life as a result of the pregnancy may decrease your interest in sex. It may be harder for you to have an orgasm.

Various factors during the different phases of pregnancy can affect sexual desire:

- During the first 3 months of pregnancy, you may have very tender breasts, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, and fears of miscarriage. These things may lessen your interest in sex.
- In the second trimester, many women find they are more interested in sex. Nausea, fatigue, and fears of miscarriage are usually over. The increased blood supply to the pelvic area may make you feel more sexually aroused.
- During the last 3 months, you or your partner may feel awkward about your big abdomen. Some women may feel unattractive. You may worry that sex will harm the baby. Occasionally, husbands may resent all the attention their wives give to preparation for the birth. Any of these things may decrease your interest in sex.



Make sure that you and your partner share your feelings with each other. Many women find that they need more affection, closeness, and tenderness during pregnancy. Intercourse is not the only way you can have physical closeness. Touching, kissing, and holding can be satisfying and tender ways to show love and affection.

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Different Positions

As your abdomen becomes large, sex may become uncomfortable. During the last few months avoid having a lot of pressure on the abdomen. Also, deep penetration of the penis during sex may be painful. Try the following positions for greater comfort:

- woman on top
- the man facing the woman's back
- lying side by side.

Limitations

In some cases your healthcare provider may advise you to limit or avoid sex during pregnancy. For example, you may be advised to avoid sex if you have:

- a history or threat of miscarriage, premature labor, or premature delivery (before 37 weeks)
- cramps or vaginal bleeding
- infection
- pain with intercourse
- leaking fluid or breaking of the bag of water
- complications with the pregnancy, such as placenta previa.

Many pregnant women feel some brief cramping after intercourse. Bleeding may occur once in awhile after intercourse. Cramping or bleeding should stop soon after you rest off your feet. If the cramps or bleeding get worse or do not stop, call your healthcare provider. Also call if you think you have broken your bag of water. In these cases, do not have intercourse again until you have seen your provider.

Precautions

If you have oral sex, remember that air should not be blown into the vagina. This can cause an air bubble to get into your bloodstream, which can be fatal to you and your baby.

Whatever form of sexual expression you choose, it is important to have just 1 sexual partner who is not sexually active with anyone else. Women who have more than 1 sexual partner have a greater risk of getting an infection. Sexually transmitted infections are dangerous for both you and your baby.

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This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.

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