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Program of Resources, Information and Support for Mothers



Sex after birth

It is very common for women who have just had a baby to have mixed feelings about sex. Often women say they are just too tired, or too busy to even think about it. Some men also find it difficult to return to a sexual relationship, worrying about hurting their partner.

After birth, it is important for couples to talk openly about their feelings and their sexuality, and if possible, to spend some time alone together.

The best time to resume sexual intercourse is when both are ready, bearing in mind the recent birth experience. Those that had a forceps delivery or an episiotomy tear are more likely to experience pain with intercourse, than those who had no stitches.

What can help

- ♦ **Setting the scene** - try and make some time and space for just the two of you. Call on family and friends or hire a baby sitter. Have a relaxing meal, light the candles, some quiet music...
- ♦ **Quiet time alone** - just spending some quiet time alone together to talk, cuddle, massage and kiss is important. Intimacy does not have to result in intercourse - you don't have to have sex the first time you are alone.
- ♦ **Communication** - keep talking about how you are feeling with your partner. If you are exhausted, you may prefer to go to bed to sleep - ½ hour making love is ½ hour less sleep! It's your choice...
- ♦ **Contraception** - for some women, reducing the risk of an unplanned pregnancy will make sexual activity more enjoyable. Around 10 - 20% of breastfeeding women ovulate and conceive within 12 weeks of giving birth. Talking about contraception with your doctor or family planning clinic before delivery or soon afterwards is important.
- ♦ **Feeding** - the baby before sex can reduce discomfort in breasts and reduce the risk of being interrupted!
- ♦ **Dry Vagina** - sometimes lack of oestrogen after the birth can cause a dry vagina. KY Jelly can be useful for this, available from supermarkets and chemists.
- ♦ **Changing positions** - talk with your partner about your changed/ changing body image. Consider selective positioning to avoid pressure on full/tender breasts or tender perineums. Every couple is different.

To talk about sexual health problems and for more information, contact your doctor or maternal and child health nurse.