

Postpartum Recovery: Navigating Intimacy, Contraception, and Emotional Wellbeing After Birth



Highlights

You don't need to avoid sex after giving birth unless advised by your doctor, but only return to sex when you feel ready.

Everyone recovers from pregnancy and birth differently. Listen to your body and engage in sex only when both you and your partner are ready.

Physical recovery, hormonal changes, breastfeeding, and exhaustion can affect your desire for intimacy.

It's normal to need weeks or months before feeling ready to have sex again, regardless of whether you had a caesarean or vaginal birth.

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Why Might I Have Low Libido After Childbirth?

Physical recovery: Your body may need time to heal, especially if you had stitches or a difficult birth.

Exhaustion: Caring for a newborn can leave you feeling tired and lacking energy, which impacts your sex drive.

Feeding: Breastfeeding can be uncomfortable at first, and breastfeeding hormones can cause vaginal dryness. Leaking milk during sex is also common.

Hormonal changes: Low estrogen levels and high prolactin levels during breastfeeding may cause vaginal dryness. A lubricant can help.

Body consciousness: Changes in your body after pregnancy and birth may affect how you feel about yourself.

Emotional wellbeing: The emotional impact of childbirth can cause feelings of sadness or anxiety. If these feelings persist, it's important to seek help.

How Can I Rebuild Intimacy After Having a Baby?

Take time for yourself, even if it's just a few minutes a day, to rest and recharge.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, consider reaching out to other new parents or joining a local parent's group for support.

Communicate openly with your partner about your feelings and concerns regarding intimacy. It's common for partners to have different levels of desire.

Make time for each other by doing simple activities like taking a walk, having a meal together, or cuddling while your baby naps.

Explore ways to give and receive pleasure without intercourse, such as cuddling, holding hands, or giving massages.

Do I Need to Use Contraception After Having a Baby?

You can still become pregnant after giving birth if you have unprotected sex, even while breastfeeding.

It's possible to conceive before your period returns, as soon as three weeks after birth.

If you want to avoid pregnancy, discuss contraception options with your doctor or midwife after birth.

Your doctor or midwife will typically discuss contraception during your 6-week

check-up.

When Should I Seek Help?

If sex after birth is painful, or you are concerned about your or your partner's emotional wellbeing, seek advice from a trusted health professional. Birth-related trauma can affect your physical or emotional health, and may impact your return to a healthy sex life.

If you experience sexual coercion, seek help immediately.

If you are in danger or experiencing family or domestic violence, contact emergency services.

Tools and Assistance

Support groups for new parents: These groups offer a space for new parents to connect, share experiences, and offer each other advice. It's a great way to find emotional support and practical tips for navigating life with a newborn.

Health professionals: Consult with your doctor, midwife, or a therapist if you're struggling with your physical or emotional recovery after childbirth. They can offer advice, treatments, and referrals to specialists if needed.

Contraceptive advice: Your doctor or healthcare provider can guide you on contraceptive options that are safe and effective after childbirth.

Counseling services: If you're feeling overwhelmed or experiencing emotional difficulties such as postpartum depression or anxiety, speaking to a counselor or mental health professional can be beneficial. They can help you navigate your emotions and support your well-being.

Family support: Lean on family members or close friends for help and support, whether it's with the baby or emotional encouragement.

Sexual health guidance: If you experience pain during sex or have concerns about your libido, a sexual health specialist can provide guidance and potential treatment options.