



## **SEXUALITY IN PREGNANCY**

### First Trimester

Some women experience an increase in sexual desire, and want to share, experience, and express their love to their partner sexually. Other women opt for different ways to express their love as the discomforts of the first trimester such as fatigue, nausea, sore breasts or hormone activity decreases desire. Either way, the feeling is normal. Breast tenderness can become an issue in the first trimester, and during lovemaking. Sometimes light breast massage can decrease the tenderness and can be done by your partner or by yourself in a warm shower or bath, or with natural oil. Other times, wearing a bra for support while making love can offer a sense of protection for your tender breasts. Harming the baby is a common concern when thinking about sex while pregnant. Rest assured that the baby is well protected throughout your pregnancy. Your midwife will advise you in the rare occasion that intercourse may need to be avoided. Please feel free (and comfortable) to speak with your midwife about any questions or concerns regarding sexuality throughout your pregnancy.

### Second Trimester

Most women experience an improvement in their sexual relationship in the second trimester. Generally women are feeling good and are free of the discomforts and worries common in the first trimester. Many times if desire in the first trimester was decreased, there will be an increase at this time. Sexual satisfaction is usually greater, as there is an increase in blood flow to your sexual organs and breasts. Be aware that from 16 weeks of pregnancy on colostrum, or the baby's first milk, may leak from the breasts, especially when stimulated. There is no harm in leaking, but if you or your partner become uncomfortable with this, a bra can be worn with breast pads for protection or security.

### Third Trimester

Women can begin to feel awkward and self-conscious in the third trimester. Reassurance from their partners is needed at this point. As the belly begins to enlarge, it can become harder to find a comfortable position. Experiment with positions keeping mutual pleasure and comfort in mind. Try lying sideways next to your partner or placing the woman on top or in front of her partner. For women who experience a low libido this trimester, it may be more satisfying to find other ways to please each other besides intercourse. Finding other ways of pleasuring each other can help postpartum too, as most couples wait 4-6 weeks or more after baby's birth for healing and libido to return before resuming intercourse. Remember, as long as membranes are intact (and your midwife has not said otherwise) sexual activity can occur and may even be prescribed by your midwife, as oxytocin released during orgasm can stimulate contractions, while prostaglandins, found in semen, help to ripen the cervix and prepare for labor.

### Resources

Varney, H., Kriebs, J., Gegor, C., (2004). *Varney's Midwifery, 4th edition*. Sudbury, Massachusetts: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.