



Good lovin'

The truth about sex during pregnancy

BY LOLA AUGUSTINE BROWN

MAGGIE WELLNER'S* PREGNANT SEX life was typical the first time around, but during her second pregnancy she became "the horniest diva ever!" The Winnipeg mom says that she felt completely liberated. "I wanted to do it all the time and try new things. My husband was in heaven. Now I'm 12 weeks pregnant with our third, and this time I'm not remotely interested in sex and think my husband will soon be driven to watching porn."

Although the common perception is that expectant moms have a raging libido, this is far from a universal experience. "It really varies," says Vancouver-based midwife Terry Lyn Evans, who works at the Pacific Midwifery Practice. "Some women find pregnancy really sexy while others get totally turned off, and the same can be said for their partners."

sexy or not sexy?

There are several reasons why women can have earth-moving sex when they are preppers. Besides the fact that your body is producing oxytocin, dubbed the love hormone, there is also an increased blood flow to your nether regions, which makes you extra sexually sensitive. "Also, many couples' loving relationship deepens when they are expecting, which leads to more sex," says Evans.

But not every woman feels sexy when pregnant. Kelly Baxter* loved having sex in the first trimester, but by the second she was too tired from working and in the third she felt huge. "Also, my partner wasn't into it either as he thought he was going to hurt the baby or poke him in the head!" says Baxter, who lives in Vancouver. Evans says that many women experience un-sexy side effects such as varicose veins or breast tenderness, plus some feel self-conscious with how they look as their body changes.

the fear factor

One of the most common concerns about making love during pregnancy is that having sex will in some way harm your unborn child. But as long as you are having a healthy pregnancy and have not been classified as high-risk for preterm labour, there is no reason not to have sex just as you normally would, says Evans. "Often, couples that have been trying a long time to get pregnant or who have used in-vitro fertilization to conceive are particularly con-

cerned that intercourse carries a risk of miscarriage, but it really doesn't. The baby is well cushioned from any impact," says Evans, "and your care provider will be able to reassure you of that." Also, spotting after sex is fairly common, and although it doesn't mean that the baby is in any danger, it understandably freaks out a lot of couples. Evans says she gets lots of calls from clients about this, and tells them that this can occur when a woman has a "friable" cervix—one that has more delicate skin and bleeds more easily—because the increased blood flow to the cervix makes it much more sensitive. Incidentally, there are no bad positions for the baby: just go with whatever is comfortable and gives you the most pleasure. It's important to remember that if either partner is not in a monogamous relationship, they should practice safe sex since some sexually transmitted diseases (chlamydia, genital herpes) are transmittable to the baby. And if you're not comfortable with full sex, talk to your partner about your concerns and suggest alternatives such as oral sex, cuddling or a full-body massage.

I want it, he doesn't

If your partner is having concerns about having sex while you are pregnant, sex and relationship counsellor Dr. Ian Kerner, co-author of *Love in the Time of Colic: The New Parents' Guide to Getting it on Again* (Collins Living) advises that moms-to-be let their partners know that they are feeling sexier than ever. "Also, she should remind her partner that once the baby comes sex is off-limits for six to eight weeks, so they should enjoy it while they can." Besides the obvious pleasure of sex, getting down can also be beneficial at the end of the pregnancy; Evans advises couples have sex to induce labour naturally, as semen contains prostaglandin, a hormone known to ripen the cervix, which can speed up the process.

For Vancouver dad-to-be Johnny Boneck*, pregnancy has certainly changed the way he and his wife have sex, but that's not a bad thing. "The fact that there is obviously a little person in there makes things different," he says, "but I am so in love with her at this moment, and because I see her as more vulnerable and fragile, sex has become more tender and absolutely amazing."

Freelance writer Lola Augustine Brown was chaste as a nun throughout her pregnancy, but enjoyed hearing about other people's sex lives.

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