



Emotional and Sexual Changes during Pregnancy

Pregnancy brings about many changes physically, mentally, emotionally, and sexually. Many of these changes are normal. Having someone to talk to can be a valuable tool available to you.

“As a woman moves through pregnancy she prepares for the enormous task of opening her body and her whole being to channel the life of another through to this plane of existence. The spiritual openness which pregnancy brings makes women very sensitive and vulnerable to what they feel and what they sense from others, and may result in rapidly changing moods.”

~Anne Frye, Holistic Midwifery, p. 296

The first trimester may include feelings about accepting the reality of pregnancy. It is common to feel ambivalence, rejection, anxiety, depression, and unhappiness. Being able to talk to someone about these feelings can help avoid deeper issues in the future. Feeling these emotions past the 4th month should be explored further because it may be a sign of deeper issues going on.

As for sex, a whole range of feelings maybe present. It is common for women to not feel like engaging in sexual activity. On the other hand, some women feel free of the uncertainty about becoming pregnant and feel more sexually active. Fatigue, nausea, vomiting, and breast tenderness can decrease the desire to make love. It is best to avoid making love if bleeding is present. Men and women often show their affection through making love. During this time, it may be important to remind him and yourself that affection can be shown and given in many others ways. This may be an important time for your partner to face his beliefs, attitudes, and concerns about sexuality and pregnancy. Open communication can often be the best way to help each of you stay in touch with what the other is experiencing. Counseling, exercising together, and taking time out for each other can be valuable tools for keeping your relationship strong and healthy.

The second trimester includes time to envision your new life as pregnant and the transitions it brings. Feeling the baby move, or quickening, makes the experience more real to some women. The movements represent a distinct life growing inside of you. Grieving may occur around this time over changes in your life, career, partner, and becoming a mother.

Many times any lost sexuality will come back around this time. With the increase in pelvic circulation, many women find even greater sexual satisfaction during this time. It is still a time to tune into what you need. For example, lying on your back my feel uncomfortable. Using new positions will prove useful when the uterus is larger and more cumbersome. Continue to



Cheryl Furer, CPM, RM, CHom
600 S. Airport Road, Suite G.
Longmont, CO 80503
cheryl.furer@msn.com
Phone: 303-718-1554
Fax: 720-600-4386
www.healthyfamilieshomebirth.com

have good sexual practices to avoid common problems such as urinary tract infections or vaginal infections. Good sexual practices include urinating before and after intercourse and never allowing anything that has touched the anus to then touch the vagina without being thoroughly cleaned first.

The third trimester is the time for support. You need to feel that you can depend on others for support when you heal postpartum. If you don't have support people in your life, you can start the process of hiring a postpartum doula, housecleaner, dog walker, etc. to help with the physical tasks of daily life. You may also consider the emotional changes that your partner is experiencing. This would be a good time for him to set up a support network of his own too. A counselor or group may be helpful. It is important to explore your own fears during this time. Preparation for labor can bring on another set of feelings and fears. Feel free to talk to your midwife or a counselor. Physically you may feel tired of being pregnant; yet also realizing that this time is soon coming to an end can be sad.

Sexually you may feel awkward having intercourse. Trying new positions can help replace the awkwardness. Orgasms can help release oxytocin and semen can help soften the cervix. It is normal for orgasms be followed by cramping. Although other physical discomforts such as shortness of breath, fatigue, urinary frequency, and painful pelvic ligaments, may keep you from wanting to have intercourse. Engaging in additional affectionate activities, cuddling, kissing, being held, and holding hands, can help satisfy many of the emotional and sexual needs of a pregnant woman. If you are feeling sexual, there is no reason you can't make-love up until the bags of water have broken.

“Because the hormones of pregnancy allow the curtain that usually separates body and soul to become more transparent, pregnant women are more emotionally porous and susceptible to intense dreaming than at other times in their lives. This is not a weakness. It is a gift of discernment which, if heeded, will give them intuitive insight into everything from choosing the right foods to choosing the right companions. The downside of this porousness is that they are also more apt to become depressed, moody, anxious, if those emotions are in the environment around them. That's why it's so important when pregnant to surround yourself with as many supportive people and as much positive energy as possible.”

~Christiane Northrup, Mother-daughter Wisdom, p. 75



Cheryl Furer, CPM, RM, CHom
600 S. Airport Road, Suite G.
Longmont, CO 80503
cheryl.furer@msn.com
Phone: 303-718-1554
Fax: 720-600-4386
www.healthyfamilieshomebirth.com

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