

My Birth Control

For more information, visit <https://postpartum.mybirthcontrol.org>

Let's take a minute to think about sex, your body, and birth control after having a baby.

You may or may not be thinking about if or when you want to have another baby, and birth control may not be at the top of your list. But it is possible to get pregnant very soon after having a baby, so this might be a good time to think about what birth control method would work best for you after pregnancy if you don't want to have a baby again right away.

We want to answer some common questions about postpartum health and share information about birth control after having a baby that you may need to make a decision, because there are some special things to consider.

Sex after having a baby

Some people have questions about when they can start having sex, and what sex will be like after having a baby.

Healthcare providers usually recommend that you not have sex for a while after having a baby, to promote both healing and reduce the risk of infection. Most providers will say to wait around 4 to 6 weeks, but the time that it takes to recover or feel ready is different for every person.

If you have any questions or want more information about sex after having a baby, talk to your doctor, nurse, midwife, or health educator. This might feel like an uncomfortable topic, but it is part of your provider's job to talk about it and they do so all the time.

Some things you might want to know or talk about with your provider:

- » When it is safe to have sex
- » How it might be different
- » How to minimize discomfort

In the meantime, here is some information about topics that you might be curious about or want to know as you get ready for your appointment:



Talking with your partner

Whether you feel ready to have sex or not, have open conversations with your partner about how you both are feeling. Be honest with each other about desire and readiness for sex before and after giving birth.

You may have less interest in sex while recovering from giving birth or caring for a newborn baby. Or you may feel interested in sex soon after having a baby. Either way, let your partner know what feels good or is uncomfortable and when you need space.



Listening to your body

Once you feel ready to have sex, it may take a few tries and some extra communication to figure out what feels comfortable and enjoyable for you.

Consider new positions or forms of sex that don't involve penetration, or try creating intimacy with your partner in a new way - for some people, just getting some quiet time to be together can be really important.



Real talk: Dryness and Tenderness

Sex may feel a little different for the first few months after having a baby. Having some extra information might make your journey a little easier.

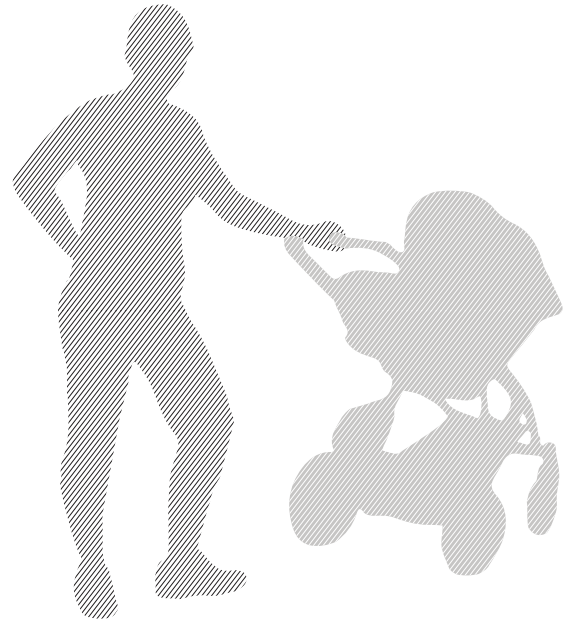
Dryness and lubrication

- » Due to changes in hormones after having a baby, it is very common to experience dryness during sex.
- » Using a lubricant can help make sex feel more comfortable and enjoyable.

Breast tenderness and leaking

- » After having a baby, many people experience breast tenderness.
- » Talk with your partner about what feels comfortable or parts of your body to avoid during intimate moments.

- » For people who are breastfeeding, it is common to experience milk letting down during sex or milk leakage during orgasm. (This is a normal involuntary reflex.) For some people, this is no big deal. Others might try to time their intimate moments – for example, breastfeeding or pumping milk before. Others might keep a bra on during sex with nursing pads or a bra with a little cloth tucked into it.



What are your feelings about getting pregnant again?

Every person and every pregnancy is different. What comes up for you when you think about getting pregnant again in the future?

You may or may not be thinking about having another baby yet, but it is possible to get pregnant very soon after having a baby. This might be a good time to consider time between pregnancies and what birth control method would work best for you if you don't want to have a baby again right away.

Time between pregnancies

If you think you want to get pregnant again, it's important to know that very short periods of time between pregnancies could lead to health problems.

These problems could include low birth weight and a chance that a baby can be preterm (meaning born before 37 weeks).

If you are thinking about having another baby, experts recommend waiting at least 18 months after delivering your baby until your next pregnancy. Many people do choose to have babies closer together than this for different reasons. Only you know what is the best for your family.

Birth control options

Depending on how long you want to wait before having your next baby or if you feel like this is your last baby, different birth control methods might be a good option for you.

If you are planning to wait, there are a number of methods to choose from. This tool will provide information about what you might consider about different methods after having a baby, and can help you figure out what is the right fit for you.

Breastfeeding and birth control

Can breastfeeding be a method of birth control?

Yes, breastfeeding can be an effective, temporary method of birth control for up to six months after you have a baby if:

- » you are exclusively breastfeeding (not giving any formula to the baby); and
- » you are breastfeeding frequently (every 2-3 hours) throughout the day and night; and
- » you are not getting your period.

Sometimes you can't predict when a baby will sleep through the night (and won't breastfeed) or if breastfeeding will get disrupted. The information from this tool can help you decide what form of birth control would work best for you, and if you want to use it, when you are breastfeeding less than every 2-3 hours.

How does it work?

When a baby nurses, a hormone called prolactin is released. It ensures an ongoing milk supply, and it also decreases other hormones that cause the release of an egg from your ovaries (ovulation), that could be fertilized and result in a pregnancy.

Breastfeeding

Resources

You've probably heard that breastfeeding can have benefits for babies and parents. We also know that different things work for different families.

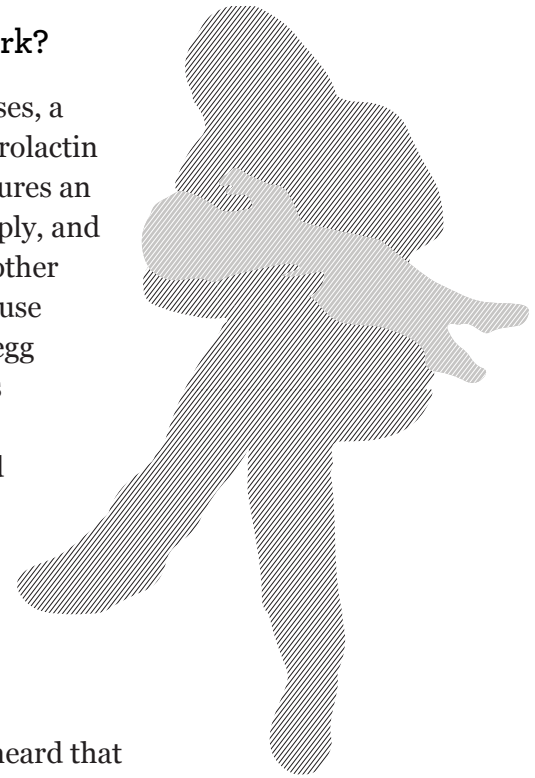
You may have questions. Talk to your healthcare provider about:

- » what you want to do or how things are going
- » seeing a lactation consultant, a person who can support you and answer your questions
- » how you can get a breast pump

For more information on breastfeeding, visit:

- » **La Leche League**
<https://www.llli.org/breastfeeding-info>
- » **WIC breastfeeding resources**
<https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov>

Whether you decide to breastfeed or not, make sure you get the support you need.



Important information about birth control after having a baby

If you are interested in thinking about birth control, there are some specific things to consider when you are choosing a method right after having a baby.



When you can start

There are special recommendations for when to start methods containing the hormone estrogen (the pill, the patch, and the ring) because of blood clot risk and breastfeeding considerations. All other methods are safe to start right after you deliver your baby.

For both the hormonal and non-hormonal IUDs, there is a slightly higher risk of the IUD being pushed out of its perfect spot in the uterus when it is inserted immediately after delivery.



Blood clot risk

Birth control methods that contain estrogen - the pill, the patch and the ring – can increase your risk of blood clots right after having a baby. For this reason, you should not use these methods for 3 weeks after delivering your baby.

Individuals with certain risk factors, such as prior blood clots, recently having had a C-section, smoking, or obesity should wait for 6 weeks before using these methods. After 6 weeks, everyone who otherwise are safe to use methods with estrogen can use the pill, patch, or ring.

For all other methods, there is no additional risk of blood clots after delivering a baby.



Breastfeeding

It is recommended that you do not use methods of birth control containing the hormone estrogen (the pill, the patch, and the ring) during the first month after delivery because of the effect of this hormone on breastfeeding.

Everyone is different, but these methods have the potential to decrease milk supply. This is something to consider if you want to breastfeed your baby.

All other methods can be started right away, even if you are breastfeeding (we're going to talk about all of your options in a minute!).

Special considerations for birth control after having a baby

Each method is different in terms of the things you might want to think about when choosing birth control after having a baby and we want you to have all the information you need.

Take a closer look at issues to consider by method.



Internal condom

- » Can be started right away
- » No additional blood clot risk
- » Can be used while breastfeeding



Male condom

- » Can be started right away
- » No additional blood clot risk
- » Can be used while breastfeeding



Diaphragm

- » Can be started right away
- » No additional blood clot risk
- » Can be used while breastfeeding



Pill

- » When you can start this method depends on your risk factors for blood clots and whether you are breastfeeding. Everyone who otherwise is safe to use this method can start it after 6 weeks.
- » Increased blood clot risk before 3 weeks after delivery, and up to 6 weeks for people with

certain risk factors (such as a recent C-section, obesity, smoking or previous blood clot)

- » For people who are breastfeeding, can start using one month after delivery



Patch

- » When you can start this method depends on your risk factors for blood clots and whether you are breastfeeding. Everyone who otherwise is safe to use this method can start it after 6 weeks.
- » Increased blood clot risk before 3 weeks after delivery, and up to 6 weeks for people with certain risk factors (such as a recent C-section, obesity, smoking or previous blood clot)
- » For people who are breastfeeding, can start using one month after delivery



Ring

- » When you can start this method depends on your risk factors for blood clots and whether you are breastfeeding. Everyone who otherwise is safe to use this method can start it after 6 weeks.
- » Increased blood clot risk for 3 weeks after delivery, and up to 6 weeks for people with certain risk factors (such as a recent C-section, obesity, smoking or previous blood clot)
- » For people who are breastfeeding, can start using one month after delivery



Shot

- » Can be started right away
- » No additional blood clot risk
- » Can be used while breastfeeding



Implant

- » Can be started right away
- » No additional blood clot risk
- » Can be used while breastfeeding



Copper IUD

- » Can be started right away, but there is a slightly higher risk of the IUD coming out when inserted immediately after delivery. You can also wait 4 weeks for insertion to reduce risk of this happening
- » No additional blood clot risk
- » Can be used while breastfeeding



Hormonal IUD

- » Can be started right away, but there is a slightly higher risk of the IUD coming out when inserted immediately after delivery. You can also wait 4 weeks to have it put in to reduce the risk of this happening
- » No additional blood clot risk
- » Can be used while breastfeeding



Sterilization

- » Can be done right away after the birth (cesarean or vaginal) or later on (just so you know, you may need to sign a consent form for sterilization 30 days before having the procedure, so if you are interested in this method you may want to talk to your provider sooner rather than later)
- » No additional blood clot risk
- » Can be used while breastfeeding

Note: Insurance coverage for the implant, IUDs and sterilization may be different right after you deliver your baby than later on. Talk to your provider for more information.

To use the My Birth Control decision support tool, visit:
<https://postpartum.mybirthcontrol.org>