

# Sex and Intimacy

**AFTER HAVING YOUR BABY**

**Answers to some commonly asked questions  
about sexual relationships after giving birth**

**PREVIEW**

**SHINE<sub>SA</sub>**

# WHAT IS THIS BOOKLET ABOUT?

Having a baby is a life-changing experience that can bring great joy and fulfilment. The big changes it brings can present some challenges, especially if you're becoming a parent for the first time. With all the new demands and responsibilities of parenting, it's very likely that you will also notice changes in your intimate relationship/s.

It is common for new parents to feel uncertain or unsure about becoming sexually active again after having their baby.

The demands of being a parent can mean that you:

- Don't have sex as often
- Don't feel as sexually desirable or attractive as you used to
- Want to wait until you feel 'back to normal' before you have sex
- May feel less interested in having sex
- Find it harder to become aroused and to have an orgasm
- Find sex less enjoyable
- Have difficulty finding the time, energy and privacy for sex

The information in this booklet is designed to answer questions you may have about sex after having your baby, your contraceptive choices and things that can help you and your partner enjoy your sexual relationship again.



This booklet  
answers some of  
the commonly  
asked questions  
parents have about  
**PREVIEW**  
being intimate and  
having sex after  
their baby is born.

# WHEN CAN I START HAVING SEX?

You can start having sex whenever you feel ready and comfortable. This is different for everyone and is influenced by how your body is recovering as well as everything else that is going on in your life.

After a baby is born, the uterus and vagina recover fairly quickly, usually within two to six weeks. Of course, it's important to follow the advice or instructions given to you by your midwife or doctor. Especially if there were any complications when your baby was born or if you had stitches or a caesarean birth.

How well your body recovers after giving birth is only one factor in having sex after birth. Some other factors that might affect being sexually active again include:

- Feeling too tired or exhausted
- Your experiences during labour
- Whether you had stitches, a tear or episiotomy
- Whether your breasts feel swollen, tender or are leaking
- How healthy you were during your pregnancy
- Feeling that there are too many demands being made of you
- How well your baby is and how well your baby settles
- Having to focus on the baby's needs
- Your culture or religion
- How your partner is feeling



# Remember, it needs to feel right. PREVIEW

There isn't any need to hurry.

Enjoy your partner's company and take time to explore each other again. There are other ways to experience pleasure with your partner without having sex and if certain experiences don't feel good then stop.

**It's okay to say no to sex if you don't feel like it and it's okay if you change your mind at any time.**

It's not okay for you to feel pressured into sexual activity of any kind.

If you are feeling pressured into having sex or are scared of or feel threatened by your partner, talk to someone you can trust, like a friend, health worker, or counsellor.