

Pregnancy & newborn

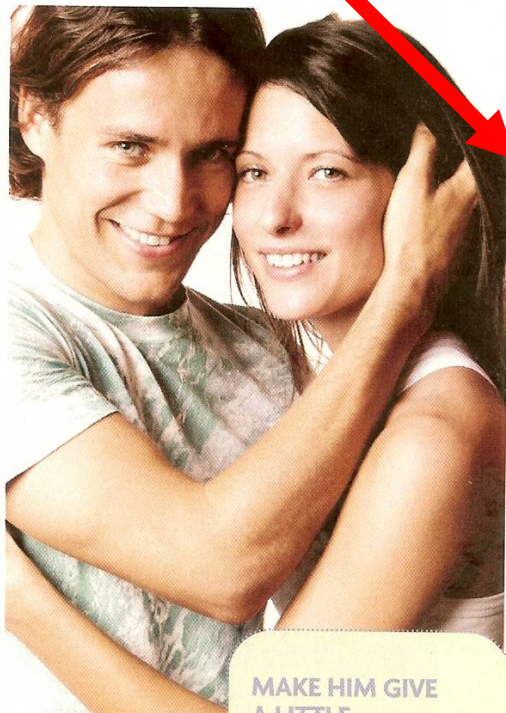
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good life love & sex

Let's *(not)* get it on

Keeping the spark alive in your relationship is increasingly important—and difficult—during parenthood and pregnancy.

ANDREA JACOBSON asked the sexperts what you and your partner can do to maintain intimacy when you just don't feel like doing the deed.



Morning sickness, an oversized belly, sheer exhaustion from caring for your new baby—whatever your reason is for not wanting to have sex these days, you can't allow your lack of libido to lessen you and your partner's level of intimacy.

"Maintaining intimacy during pregnancy is incredibly important, because after that baby is born you won't have time to breathe, let alone touch each other. Having a baby is wonderful but also stressful, so you have to make sure you're both making the effort to not become room-mates—you still need to be romantic partners as you become parenting partners," explains Logan Levkoff, M.S., a certified sex educator. "Redefine what sex is while you're pregnant [or a new parent] and don't want

physical intercourse. There is a range of other activities where you can experience pleasure and intimacy."

We asked the experts for their input on some intercourse-free, intimate activities you and your partner can do together, and here are the ones we think are worth a try.

Go back to the basics

Remember when you first met your guy and just holding hands or brushing against his thigh made you all tingly? That just goes to show that even the smallest acts of affection can do a lot to increase the love between two people.

"Holding hands, hugging, kissing—activating [each other's] tactile senses forges intimacy. When a woman holds her husband's hand, her stress levels go down which is healthier for both her and the baby," says Debbie Mandel,

MAKE HIM GIVE A LITTLE

Maintaining intimacy in any relationship is a two-way street, so founder of urbanrapturenyc.com Barbara Purcell came up with 3 easy ways that your guy can do his part.

SURPRISE HER. Putting thought into a spontaneous act is sure to win her over. Rather than just getting her flowers, pick up a book you'd think she'd like or tickets to a concert she's been talking about.

TELL HER WHY you think she's beautiful rather than just telling her she looks great.

PAY ATTENTION TO DETAIL, whether it's remembering an important date or doing that extra little thing she loves in the bedroom.

M.A., a stress management/relationship expert and author of *Turn on Your Inner Light*. "In addition, touching intimately shows her husband that she loves him and that not having sex is a temporary state."

So by bathing together, going for an afternoon drive, cuddling and participating in other activities that require closeness, you can help ensure intimacy between you and your partner.

Enjoy a massage

"One way to stay connected is to exchange massages. Make the most of your environment; use soft lights, candles, incense, soothing music—whatever works for you. The massage can be aimed at fostering relaxation and a feeling of closeness, or it can evolve into something more erotic, stopping short of intercourse. It's important that both giver and receiver are comfortable, particularly during pregnancy," advise Patricia Johnson and Mark A. Michaels, authors of *Tantra for Erotic Empowerment: The Key to Enriching Your Sexual Life*.

And while exchanging massages is more feasible while you're pregnant and don't have a crying baby in the next room, there are still plenty of opportunities for post-pregnancy rubdowns. Stephanie Buehler, a licensed psychologist and sex therapist suggests that you take turns holding the baby while you rub each other's necks or feet. "Healing touch is a great way to stay connected and remind yourselves that sex is more than intercourse," says Buehler.