



Bringing sexy back!

Are you struggling to get back to your pre-baby bedroom antics?
M&B helps you revisit love!

BY KRISSELLE FONSECA

You and your better half thought that having a baby would bring the two of you closer. And in many ways, it has. But there's someone coming in between you—someone with 10 little toes, a cute button nose, and an addiction to milk! However, that's not the only kicker in your otherwise spicy sex life. Your partner has just witnessed you give birth—one of the most painful experiences us ladies have to endure—and all the gory details must be playing on his mind. Given that the two of you have your hands full 24x7, adjusting to your new role, the sleepless nights, hormonal changes and caring for your infant. Phew! It's certainly is not a problem if you choose to cool off on the sex. But if you and your spouse have different levels of sexual desire, that might be cause for concern.

If you feel like something's got to give and it's your relationship that's bearing the brunt, be rest assured that you are not alone! Studies have shown that most parents find their love life takes a hit during the first six months, upto a year. However, you may find that the butterflies in your nether region are still fluttering, and it's your spouse who'd rather prefer a good night's sleep more appealing

than a tumble between the sheets. This may lead to a few heated arguments and you wracking your head wondering what could have gone awry. We help you understand and solve...

COMMUNICATE

As magical as the birthing process may be, it can be tough for your better half to witness how it all goes down. So if he's the one that's low on libido, chances are that he's just worried about your wellbeing, and will need sometime. "It's not uncommon for dads to seem withdrawn or uninterested in getting down to business, post birth. It's mainly a psychological aspect, as he is traumatised by the birth process. However, it is just a passing phase. Try talking to him to gauge what he is feeling. You can also go for counselling with a sexual consultant, if the problem persists, to try and turn up the heat. It is a lot for your significant other to see you go through so many physical and emotional changes, and witnessing it all might have been unsettling. Which means that he will take time to get intimate again, and you'll observe how he probably treats you like a delicate darling!" says Dr Kiran Coelho, consultant, gynaecology and

obstetrics, Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai.

It is imperative that the two of you talk about your feelings, because no good ever came from keeping things bottled up. If you're not feeling sexy either, simply take time out to discuss it. UK-based relationship expert Gladeana McMahon says, "Explain to him that your lack of interest in sex doesn't mean you've lost interest in him. Often, worrying about sex and feeling guilty are turn-offs in themselves, so the more you worry the less likely you'll want to have sex. But remember, your partner isn't telepathic, so if you don't tell him how you feel, he won't know what's going on and he won't be able to support you."

INITIATE

Now that the two of you have had "the talk", it's time to get down to business. This doesn't mean you dive right in, but rather start small, so as to rekindle the spark. Something as simple as a date night at home or cosying up with a romantic movie is enough to initiate intimacy. Caring for the baby may leave you with little to no time to spare, but it is important that you schedule date/movie nights once or twice a week to unwind. However, you might want to hold off on the sexy stuff for a few days after birth—it is medically recommended not to engage in intercourse until 40 days postpartum, a period known as 'puerperium'. "In case of vaginal birth, the muscles need time to recover their strength and stability.

If the mum has had a perineal tear or episiotomy during vaginal birth, it will also have a longer recovery, with vaginal discharge post delivery, known as 'lochia'. During this period, early intercourse can increase the risk of an infection. Even in case of a caesarean delivery, it can also affect vaginal sensation. The same hormonal issues can make the tissues of the vagina dry and thin, possibly leading to painful sex. Therefore, the mum and dad need to make sure the incision site has properly healed before having sex. A post check-up and proper internal examination after 40 days, along with the green signal from your doctor is when the two of you should get started," says Dr Coelho. Avoid indulging in oral sex for the first two weeks after you've given birth, because there is a high risk of infection, and it could lead to a potentially fatal embolism if air enters your uterus. However, there's no reason the two of you shouldn't have your alone time. Regulate your feeds so that you and hubby dearest get time for each other, after the baby goes

to sleep.

"Physical contact is vital. Make time to cuddle each other, have a bath together or massage each other. Sex isn't just about intercourse, so engaging in foreplay even if it doesn't lead to full-on sex will ensure your sex drive will return with time," advises Gladeana.

ENJOY

In your bid to bring sexy back, don't lose sight of what's most important—to enjoy and cherish this time together. Let your spouse know what you need and at the same time, listen to his needs too. If you find him withdrawn, talk to him and listen. Try to see things from his point of view, and avoid quarrelling over not seeing eye to eye in terms of sexual desire. He's not going to not want to have sex forever; he just needs time to overcome his experience in the birthing room! However, you also need to be mindful of your expectations from him. "Don't expect your pre-baby sex life to pick up where it left off. Being a new parent is tough and striving for perfection is a recipe for disappointment. It can take up to two years for your body to return to its pre-pregnancy condition, and that goes for your sex drive too," says Gladeana. You may not have as much time on your hands as you used to, but you must find it. You may be a mum now, but you're also a woman and if you deny yourself of the pleasures between the sheets, you might become resentful.

"Pregnancy and delivery change a lot about your body, as well as your sex drive. Post-delivery hormonal changes may make vaginal tissue thinner and more sensitive. Breastfeeding can also lower libido, so it is important to keep the intimacy going by simply spending time with each other. I always gift my patient and her spouse a candle light dinner at the hospital, the night before discharge. It is important to rekindle the intimacy as early as possible" Dr Coelho says. Remember mums, in order to get his mind off the labour process, turn up the heat, and resume service, you'll need to show him just how much you want him. Remind him of the things that the two of you enjoyed in the bedroom—the spontaneity, the adventure, and a whole lotta' love. "Sex is one of the most emotional ways you can bond with your partner and you owe it to your relationship to create time for it. You may not have sex as often as you used to, but it's quality over quantity," says



KEEP IN MIND

- The first three months of nursing is totally safe for intercourse without worrying about anything. If you are not breastfeeding, your periods will return around six weeks post birth, but if you are, they could take much longer. However, don't rely on nursing to provide protection; make sure you sort it at your six-week check up. In case of pain during intercourse, an anaesthetic lubricant or gel can be used.
- Sleep deprivation may leave you physically and emotionally drained, and it will be easier to

lash out. Simply talk to your other half about what you may be feeling and work through your moods swings. It makes it that much better if your partner knows what is going on and what you may need from him.

- When you cease sexual activity, you can also 'train' yourself to not want to have sex, and may even get used to living without it. It's important to see this loss as natural and not heap undue emotional pressure on yourself. But it is also important that you don't fall into the trap of learning to live without sex!