Dear Alice,

Should we continue to have intercourse when child birth is a week away?

**Answer**

Dear Reader,

Ah, sex before the baby arrives, what a great question! Parents-to-be often worry that sex during pregnancy could be harmful to the baby. Common concerns include "poking" the baby, causing a miscarriage, or harming the pregnant woman. It should come as some relief that, while these fears are quite normal, they are mostly unfounded.

Unless the pregnancy is considered high-risk, sex is a-ok because the baby is protected in the womb by the amniotic sac. Even orgasms, which cause uterine contractions, don't lead to premature labor or birth. If you're unsure whether or not the pregnancy is high-risk, or if you're feeling particularly concerned, you can consult with your ob/gyn or health care provider.

What isn't unfounded is the way sexuality and emotions can change upon the imminent birth of a child. Some women may not want to have intercourse when they are so close to giving birth, while some might find that they are unusually turned on. Hormones rage during pregnancy, which can swing a woman's sex drive either way. Similarly, a partner's anxieties or excitements about becoming a parent or about the ways in which a woman's body changes during pregnancy can either stimulate or sedate sex drive. Take comfort in knowing that both reactions and responses are perfectly fine and normal. It may ease potential discomfort for partners to talk about how they are feeling in a truthful and supportive way.

A consideration ? sexual positions that are enjoyable before or early in pregnancy can be uncomfortable and even unsafe later on. For example, when a very pregnant woman lies on her back, the uterus puts pressure on some major blood vessels, which could be dangerous. Lying sidewise or having the pregnant woman on top are both great remedies for this concern. If oral sex is involved, make sure not to blow air into the vagina. It's rare but possible for a burst of air to enter the vaginal canal and block a blood vessel ? a life-threatening condition for the woman and the baby. It's also wise to keep in mind that during pregnancy exposure to sexually transmitted infections can affect the health of both the mother and the baby; pregnant women having intercourse with new partners should use barrier methods (like condoms).

After a baby is born, many doctors recommend waiting at least six weeks before resuming
intercourse. This allows time for the cervix to close and for any tears to heal. But until the birth
day, go for it! Enjoy your intimacy, knowing that your bun in the oven is safe.

Alice!
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