



♥ makin' whoopee?

Is your baby cramping your Valentine's Day plans? Keep the sparks alive with these tips, writes *Katie McGregor*.

While you're expecting

- ♥ Don't talk endlessly about the baby; remember to be interested in yourselves as a couple. Communication and maintaining intimacy is critical since you will need to be strong together, especially in the first years of your child's life. Practise now.
- ♥ Don't fear sex during pregnancy. Men especially might feel a bit uncomfortable about getting so "intimate" with their unborn child. Make sure that your partner understands – *before* the moment it becomes urgent – that the unborn baby is so well-protected that intercourse won't harm it.
- ♥ Practise your Kegels (pelvic-floor exercises). You're supposed to do this anyway, but you can make exercising part of your sex life – and it helps with orgasms.
- ♥ If you want to watch videos and documentaries about birth together before your baby arrives, avoid ones that choose to zoom in graphically on the vagina during the actual birth. Seeing these images does nothing for a man's sexual appetite.

After baby's debut

- ♥ Post-partum exhaustion almost wipes out the will to live for many women. Encourage your partner to lighten your load by helping to make sure you are fed, to bring the baby to you for feedings, to give the baby a feed with a bottle (if you're bottle-feeding) and so on, so you can rest. A little TLC can do wonders for your spirit, and you may then approach attempts at intimacy with a little more goodwill.
- ♥ Post-partum depression is a reality for about ten per cent of new mothers. Men can also suffer depression: they can feel very intimidated by all the changes but, at the same time, might feel conflicted by trying to be the strong

one. Make sure that your partner realises this before the birth, as forewarned is forearmed. Arrange for post-natal follow-up home visits before baby arrives, and go to a mum and baby clinic so that you can talk about the way you feel with professionals (as well as other mums) after your baby arrives.

- ♥ Flirting can take the place of physical intimacy – a sexy wink, a naughty note, a cheeky smile. Just like when you first met, flirting promises future physical intimacy, helps release a few feel-good endorphins and creates a sense of togetherness.
- ♥ Get your partner to treat you to a sexy breastfeeding bra. Not only will this make you feel more desirable and perhaps drive him wild, but wearing a bra during sex disguises the perhaps off-putting sight of leaking breast milk.
- ♥ Attempts at intercourse are usually only recommended six weeks post-partum and, even then, with sore nipples and your "bits" still tender, it can be a dreaded notion. Try starting out with a massage and one thing might just lead to another.
- ♥ When you do go for it, have lubricant ready – hormones can sometimes cause dryness, which can mean uncomfortable sex.
- ♥ Relax. Don't give each other a hard time: nobody is perfect. Sometimes it is best to let go of all those high expectations and just let it be. 

These tips come from Hulda Thorey, the founder and director of Annerley (www.annerley.com.hk). Hulda is a registered HK midwife and mother of four children. She is a guest lecturer at the Hong Kong School of Midwifery in the Prince of Wales Hospital and has a guest spot on RTHK.