

SELF

Here's How Often You Should Have Sex For The Best Chance Of Getting Pregnant

Amy Marturana | August 27



Obviously having sex increases your chances of getting pregnant. Getting pregnant naturally is impossible without it. While logic would tell you that the more you have sex the greater your chances are that a sperm and egg will finally meet and make a baby, that's not necessarily the case.

“That's one of the misconceptions a lot of people have when they come in for the first time,” Wendy Chang, M.D., a reproductive endocrinology specialist at Southern California Reproductive Center, tells SELF. “The biggest thing that's unclear is how often they should be having intercourse.” As it turns out, doing the deed more than once a day probably won't increase your chances of getting pregnant. But you also shouldn't be limiting your romps for fear of depleting sperm.

“It's an old wives' tale that waiting for a whole week could save up a whole bunch of good sperm and give you the best possible chance of getting pregnant,” Alan B. Copperman, M.D., director of the division of reproductive endocrinology and infertility at Mount Sinai Hospital and medical director of Reproductive Medicine Associates of New York, tells SELF. “What that does is often cause couples to miss peak fertile periods, so waiting for a whole week isn't a great idea,” he adds.

Semen volume and sperm concentration does go down with ejaculation frequency, but the Mayo Clinic notes that this reduction usually isn't an issue for healthy men. Studies also show that daily ejaculation can improve sperm quality and motility (aka, its ability to move). “If sperm is stored too long in the genital tract, oxidation can occur,” Chang explains. This can cause damage to the swimmers—similarly to how oxidation damages skin cells and leads to signs of aging. Because of this, some experts believe that it's beneficial to have sperm cycle through more often instead of letting it sit around for too long. “Men with poor sperm DNA quality can improve the quality if they ejaculate daily,” she says. “So it's actually

beneficial from a pregnancy rate and sperm quality point of view for patients to have daily intercourse,” she adds.

Having sex more than once a day, though, probably isn’t going to further anyone’s mission. “Having sex three times a day won’t cause infertility, but the second and third time won’t add to the likelihood of success,” Copperman says. Whereas women are born with all the eggs they’ll ever have, the testes are making new sperm every day. “So guys are making sperm all the time, but the number of mature sperm that are ready to procreate is somewhat limited.” If you’re having sex more than once a day, it’s likely the man’s sperm won’t be completely recharged, if you will, for rounds two, three, four...you get the point. That doesn’t mean you should put a limit on your sexy time. “At some point it just becomes recreational and not procreational,” Copperman says. And there’s nothing wrong with that, especially when you’re trying to relieve some stress during a very stressful process.

Generally, Chang says she suggests couples have sex daily in the week leading up to and on the day of ovulation. (Here’s how to figure out when you’re ovulating and therefore, your most fertile.) But it’s important to note that every couple’s fertility is different, so what works for some may not be right for others. In any given month, a healthy, fertile couple (if the woman is under 35) only has about a 20 percent chance of conceiving, so it’s normal if you don’t get pregnant right away. If you’ve been trying for 12 months to no avail, or 6 months if you’re over 35, it’s worth seeing a fertility specialist. Coital frequency is far from the top cause of infertility, so if you’re having sex during your most fertile times and still having a tough time conceiving, something else might be going on.

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