

Midwifery and Neonatal Nursing

August 28-30, 2017 Philadelphia, USA

Promotion of sexual life and intimate relationships of nursing mothers

Marjan Khajehei

CMC Women's Health Research, Australia

Background: The birth of a child and breastfeeding can test even the strongest relationships. In many cases, couples are unprepared for the changes and face many challenges.

Methods: In this study a search of electronic databases and scholarly journals resulted in identifying English language studies on the association between breastfeeding and sexual dysfunction. All studies were evaluated regarding predefined criteria.

Results: Women who breastfeed resume sexual intercourse at a later time after childbirth, have lower level of sexual desire and report higher rate of vaginal dryness, dyspareunia and relationship difficulties. Different impacts of breastfeeding on sexual function can be explained as follows: (a) Cultural factors (b) Physical and psychological changes (c) sensitivity of breasts: Breastfeeding causes an increase in the sensitivity of breasts, which may result in better erotic response and body image resulting in better sexual function in some women. The increased sensitivity of breasts may, however, make breast stimulation unpleasant for some other women during foreplay and cause sexual problems and (d) Substantial alterations in hormone levels such as the release of great amounts of oxytocin during breastfeeding may result in positive mood changes and sexual arousal of women. In contrast, the higher level of prolactin during breastfeeding can result in a decline of androgens and estrogen followed by a lower desire for sex and a higher level of vaginal dryness and dyspareunia. It has been suggested that some women are sensitive to the decrease of androgen and estrogen and experience sexual problems, while others may be more sensitive to the increase of oxytocin and report an improved sexual function during breastfeeding.

Conclusion: Midwives and nurses are the first point of contact for many perinatal women and play a fundamental role in addressing the perinatal women's sexual problems and promoting their quality of lives. It is important that midwives and nurses address sexual function with breastfeeding women, help identify those experiencing problems, provide them with information and resources and promote their quality of life.

Marjan.Khajehei@health.nsw.gov.au