Contraception may be the last thing on your mind when you have just had a baby, but it is something you need to think about if you want to delay or avoid another pregnancy. Many unplanned pregnancies happen in the first few months after childbirth, so even if you're not interested in sex at the moment, it is better to be prepared.

How soon can I have sex again?
You can have sex as soon as you and your partner want to. Having a baby causes many physical and emotional changes for both partners and it may take some time before you feel comfortable or ready to have sex. Everyone is different, so do not feel pressured or worry that you are not normal if you don’t feel ready to have sex. It can help to talk to your partner about any concerns you have.

When will my periods restart?
The earliest your periods can return is six weeks after birth if you are not breastfeeding. If you are breastfeeding you will start ovulating and having periods when you are breastfeeding less often and for shorter periods of time. You can become pregnant before your periods return because ovulation (when the ovary releases an egg) occurs about two weeks before you get your period.

How soon do I need to use contraception?
You need to start using contraception from three weeks (21 days) after the birth. Don’t wait for your periods to return or until you have your postnatal check before you use contraception as you could get pregnant again before then.

If you are fully breastfeeding you can choose to rely on this for contraception. (See Will breastfeeding act as a contraceptive? on page 7).

When can I start to use contraception?
- You don’t need to use any contraception in the first three weeks after the birth as it is not possible to become pregnant in this time.
- You can use male and female condoms as soon as you want to.
- You can start to use the contraceptive implant from three weeks after the birth.
- If you are not breastfeeding then you can use the combined pill, the contraceptive vaginal ring and the contraceptive patch from three weeks after the birth.
- You can start the progestogen-only pill any time after the birth.
- It is usually recommended that you wait until six weeks after the birth to start the contraceptive injection because then you are less likely to have heavy and irregular bleeding. It is possible to use it earlier if there are no alternatives you find acceptable.
- The IUD or IUS can be inserted four weeks after vaginal or caesarean birth.
- You can start to use a diaphragm or cap six weeks after giving birth.
- Natural family planning can be used at any time. It may be more difficult to identify the signs and symptoms of fertility immediately after giving birth or when you are breastfeeding.

Other Headings
Which contraceptive method will be suitable for me?
What should I use if I want another baby in a year or so?
What should I use if I don’t want another baby for some time?
What are permanent methods of contraception?
Will breastfeeding act as a contraceptive?
Will contraception affect the breast milk?
Can I use emergency contraception after the birth?
What if I need a rubella vaccination?