

# (Q&A)

## ASK THE EXPERTS

### > Q6 | So Stuffy

**My four-month old son often gets a stuffy nose when he wakes up in the morning. I've tried switching off the air-conditioner and using a fan instead, but it hasn't improved things. Sometimes, he even throws up phlegm, although he always seems to feel better after that. He doesn't have a fever, just a constant stuffy nose and the occasional throw-up. The doctor says he's too young for medication and prescribed a saline solution drip for his nose. Is there anything else I can do to help him? My husband suffers from sinusitis — could my son have inherited it?**

The symptoms you describe may be due to allergies in the nose. Your husband's problem is also most likely allergic rhinitis, and there is a possibility that your child has inherited the allergic predisposition.

Allergic rhinitis is often termed 'sensitive nose' and symptoms can range from runny, itchy or sneezy nose as well as blocked nose. These symptoms can be triggered by allergen exposure and not infrequently, these are the

house dust mite allergens in the bedroom. Hence symptoms can get worse in the night or overnight. House dust mite allergens thrive in areas such as carpets or rugs, mattresses, pillows, blankets, curtains and stuffed, furry toys.

Reduction of the house dust mite allergen levels can improve the symptoms to some extent but often medication may be necessary. An anti-histamine may be useful to reduce the allergic reaction and alleviate the symptoms. Measures to reduce dust mite allergens include regular cleaning of your bed-linen (at least once a week) and preferably in hot-water washing (>60°C) and sunning of mattresses. Avoid sleeping with furry toys and do regular damp-dusting of shelves. You might also want to remove carpets or rugs from your bedroom.

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**that I'm not interested in sex right now. My husband is complaining that he feels neglected but I wish he'd be more understanding. At the same time, I feel like I 'owe' it to him to improve our sexual relations.**

For some women, it is not uncommon to feel the tightness or discomfort at the vaginal outlet during the first few attempts of intercourse following an episiotomy. Your pelvic area would have healed by five to six weeks after the delivery. The tightness you felt initially should also fade away with time. If the pain persists, it could be due to scarring or lack of lubrication and reduced arousal from your fear of pain.

If you are not getting sufficient lubrication, do engage in a more relaxed foreplay and have some water-based lubricant applied to the area before attempts of intercourse. Breast-feeding can cause reduction in your libido and estrogen level — the hormone that supports natural lubrication. The release of another hormone prolactin is important for milk production. Prolactin also dips the desire for sex.

Nine months after delivery is a bit too long a time to be without sexual activity in the case of a young couple. Speak to your husband about your concerns freely. Although your husband will understand your care for the child, it is possible that he may want a share of some of the attention. Consult your gynaecologist for appropriate professional advice.

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### > Q7 | Lost That Lovin' Feeling

**I delivered my first child through natural birth nine months ago. I was worried about tearing my episiotomy stitches at first and abstained from having sex with my husband. When we tried to be intimate two months after my delivery, I felt a pain in my private parts and we had to stop. Since then, every time we try to do it, I'd be so conscious of any pain that I simply can't go all the way. We've probably had sex less than five times in the last nine months.**

**A friend told me the pain I felt could be due to the fact that I'm breast-feeding exclusively because it causes me to 'dry up'. Is this true? Frankly, I'm so busy and tired with my baby**