



## ***Pregnancy and Privacy***

Many of us have a natural urge to touch or pat the bellies of pregnant women. We want to express our excitement, our joy about this new life. It is important to understand that many women do not find this contact endearing. Many women are highly sensitive about their altered body shape and see this contact as an invasion of their personal space. A recent humorous e-mail exchange sheds light on this issue:

**Dear Doctor,**

Is it normal to not want anyone to touch my pregnant belly? It really freaks me out. My husband thinks I have lost my mind, since my sister always had people touching her. I don't mind or freak out when he touches my belly, but when anyone else approaches with a hand out I want to turn and run!!!

**-Concerned Pregnant Patient**

**Dear Concerned Pregnant Patient,**

Your husband is wrong. You have not lost your mind. Unfortunately, tradition, human nature and the laws of our land are somewhat tilted against you. Common law, and statutes of the federal code provide that any portion of the belly that extends beyond the breast line becomes part of the public domain - even complete strangers have the right to grope you with impunity. Now, on the other hand, if your belly has not yet expanded into the public domain, these people are indeed trespassing, and you have the right to utilize any marshal art at your disposal to defend yourself.

To some extent, you may have to resign yourself to the attention. Think of yourself as the owner of a stylish cottage on the ocean front. No matter what, hordes of unknown people will wonder up and down your beachfront all summer long.

However, there are some evasive maneuvers available to you: 1) You can instantly scream out in agony, clutching your belly like it is bursting open. Falling to the floor into a fetal position adds to the effect. 2) Go to the Mother Maternal web site. They have two excellent devices to help you. You will find them by clicking the "Self Defense Pregnancy Wear" tab. One of them is an apron covered with authentic porcupine quills. Very painful. Very effective! The other one is covered with these nifty little replaceable pouches of incredibly sticky, slimy goo that break open with the slightest contact. The perpetrator is left covered with this stuff that doesn't wash off and turns bright purple after a few seconds of exposure to air. Studies have shown this to be effective too.

### **-Sympathetic Doctor**

**Dear Doctor,**

Thank you for your excellent response!!!! Marshal Arts it is then! **End**

Tongue-in-cheek aside, it is important for us to recognize that not all pregnant women want to have their bellies patted, poked, touched or stroked. At the very least, please ask first!

Michael J. Seeber, DO FACOOG