

GETTING THE FACTS ABOUT FERTILITY

It's easy to ignore your fertility, assuming that when you want to start a family, it will "just happen." But that's not always the case. Get the facts:

- A woman's fertility peaks in her mid-twenties and drops off dramatically after age 35^{1,2}
- A gradual decline in fertility is common in men older than 35.³

More than 7.3 million Americans, or one in eight couples of childbearing age, struggle with fertility problems.⁶

What is infertility?

Infertility is a disease or condition that impairs the body's ability to perform the basic function of reproduction. It is often diagnosed after a couple has not conceived after one year of actively trying. Women over the age of 35 are encouraged to seek diagnosis and treatment for infertility following six months of actively trying to conceive.^{4,5}

Causes

- Approximately 40 percent of fertility problems are due to a female factor and 40 percent are due to a male factor. In the balance of the cases, fertility issues result from problems in both partners or the cause of the infertility cannot be explained.⁵
- An ovulation disorder is the most common factor causing female fertility problems. Other causes include:
 - Blocked fallopian tubes, which can occur when a woman has had pelvic inflammatory disease or endometriosis, a condition causing adhesions and cysts.
 - Birth defects involving the structure of the uterus and uterine fibroids, which are associated with repeated miscarriages.⁴
- Male fertility problems can often be attributed to a condition known as azoospermia, when no sperm cells are produced and oligospermia, where few sperm cells are produced. Sperm cells can be misshapen or die before they can reach the egg.⁴

Today's Treatment Options

- It is important for couples experiencing fertility problems to see a specialist, or a reproductive endocrinologist (RE), or in some cases an OB/Gyn or urologist, for a complete fertility work-up and diagnosis.⁵
- Most infertility cases (85 to 90%) are treated with conventional therapies, such as drug treatment or surgical repair of reproductive organs. However, advanced techniques, such as ovarian stimulation followed by in vitro fertilization, can increase the chances of success by 40 percent overall.⁴
- Between 1985 and 2006, nearly 500,000 babies were born in the United States as a result of reported assisted reproductive technology (ART) procedures. In 2002, approximately one in every 100 babies born in the US was conceived using ART and that trend continues today.⁴

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References

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