

## UNDERSTANDING FERTILITY RISK FACTORS

Lifestyle choices, certain surgeries and even heredity can impact fertility for both men and women. By far, age has the greatest impact, but actions men and women take now could potentially affect their ability to conceive in the future. Understanding risk factors and ways to prevent and/or treat them may improve a couple's ability to conceive.

	Risk factors for women <sup>1,2,3,4</sup>	Risk factors for men <sup>2,5,6</sup>
<b>Age</b>	A woman's fertility starts to decline in her late twenties.	A man's fertility begins to decline after age 35.
<b>Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)</b>	If left untreated, STDs, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes and the human papillomavirus (HPV) can lead to scarring of the fallopian tubes and even cause changes in the cervix.	If left untreated, STDs can damage the delicate organs that transport sperm.
<b>Smoking</b>	Use of tobacco products is harmful to the ovaries and causes rapid depletion of eggs. Smoking can also increase your risk of miscarriage.	Use of tobacco products lowers sperm count, hampers sperm motility (the ability of sperm to move and swim) and causes some sperm to be abnormally shaped.
<b>Surgery of Reproductive Organs</b>	Loss of an ovary, tubal ligation or surgery for cervical dysplasia can make it more difficult to get pregnant.	A vasectomy causes sterility by cutting the tubes that move the sperm.
<b>Cancer Treatment</b>	Radiation and chemotherapy treatments frequently damage ovaries.	Radiation and chemotherapy treatments frequently damage sperm and sperm producing cells.
<b>Others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Endometriosis:</b> Endometriosis is a condition in which tissue usually found inside the lining of the uterus grows elsewhere in the body, mainly in the abdominal cavity. Women with endometriosis can develop cysts, lesions, and scar tissue that can impair fertility.</li> <li>• <b>Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS):</b> PCOS occurs when a woman's hormones are out of balance, causing problems with menstruation and making it difficult to get pregnant. Women with PCOS often have irregular periods or no periods at all, and experience months when they do not ovulate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Exposure to chemicals:</b> Commonly used pesticides and industrial solvents, as well as radiation, may harm sperm production.</li> <li>• <b>Prescription drug use:</b> Some prescription drugs can cause infertility, including medications to treat heart disease and high blood pressure.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Premature Menopause:</b> Women whose mothers experienced menopause earlier than age 40 have a higher chance of premature menopause as well.</li></ul>	
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**References**

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