

Family Planning: Visiting A Fertility Specialist

(NAPS)—Learning the facts about fertility may help many couples to better plan their families. Waiting may not be the best idea.

More than 7.3 million Americans, or one in eight couples of childbearing age, struggle with fertility problems. A recent survey of 585 respondents (259 were female and 326 were male) has uncovered that half of these couples agree they may have waited too long; 91 percent of those currently receiving fertility treatment wish they had seen a fertility specialist sooner; and 65 percent said it never occurred to them that they may have trouble conceiving—until it happened to them.

The survey also found that both men and women didn't adequately understand the link between a woman's age and her fertility. They often don't realize how significantly a woman's fertility can decline.

Family Planning Trends

According to government data, the proportion of first births to women aged 35 and over increased nearly eight times in the past generation—it's now about one out of 12 first births compared to one out of 100 back then.

Deciding to start your family later in life can make it harder to conceive. The odds of having a baby decrease rapidly every year after age 30, and by the time you reach 40, there's only a 5 percent chance of conceiving per month.

What To Do

Here are tips to keep in mind:

- Women age 35 and over should consider a fertility expert if they've been trying in vain to conceive for six months or more.
- Women younger than 35 should do likewise if they've been trying to conceive for over a year.
- Regardless of age, women with irregular cycles who've been trying to conceive for six months should see a doctor.

What family-planning steps can couples take to improve their odds of conception? There are plenty of options but the first and most important is to seek help.



Getting the right help may mean a happy family.

"It is important for patients to quickly seek help from a specialist when they suspect there may be a problem," said Alice D. Domar, Ph.D., psychologist and executive director at Boston's Domar Center for Mind/Body Health.

More Reasons To Get Help

An inability to conceive can put a strain on relationships. Feelings of inadequacy are common, the survey found. "Couples struggling to get pregnant clearly experience a rollercoaster of emotions," explained Dr. Domar. "The desire to start a family is a strong one and failing to achieve that can impact everything from the marital relationship to interactions with future grandparents and friends who become pregnant."

Other Help

In addition to consulting a specialist to handle the physical side of fertility, couples can find help with the psychological and social aspects of trying to have a baby.

For advice on coping with the emotional burden that accompanies the struggle to get pregnant, tips on how to talk to family and friends and links to additional resources, couples can visit www.planforsomeday.com. Online communities where women and men may share their stories and seek advice are also helpful as couples continue their fertility journey. The survey was conducted by GfK Roper on behalf of Schering-Plough Corp., a subsidiary of Merck & Co., Inc.

For More Information

To view full survey results and to get more information, visit www.planforsomeday.com.