

Infertility

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Infertility is when a couple are unable to fall pregnant through sexual intercourse or a woman is unable to carry a pregnancy until birth. This is not applicable when a woman, for example, just gave birth, are breastfeeding or are using contraceptives. Infertility can also occur after you've had other children. A woman are usually the most fertile at around 24 years of age.

Causes

Infertility in woman can be due to various reasons, including:

- Problems with producing and releasing an egg cell
- Blockage of the fallopian tubes
- Infections (especially with sexually transmitted diseases – See page 65-66)
- Age
- Problems with your uterus & Endometriosis
- Immune system problems & DNA damage
- Chronic diseases - diabetes, thyroid diseases and adrenal diseases
- Hormonal problems & Obesity or Underweight
- Environmental factors – toxins, chemicals, cigarette smoke

Although it is difficult to speak about infertility, it is a real problem and nothing to be ashamed of. It is normal to feel anxious about this topic. Infertility can lead to marital problems, depression, a sense of rejection and anxiety.

Diagnosis

There are various management options to address this problem. If both partners are healthy and you have been trying to have a baby for 12 months, without success, both partners should go and see a doctor. The doctor will do some examinations and tests to identify the problem. If a couple is infertile the problem can lie with the woman, the man or both partners. In 50% of couples, the infertility lies with the man and not with the woman.

Treatment

The treatment will depend on the cause of the infertility. Treatment can be medical, surgical or lifestyle related. If conservative methods fail, your egg cell and your partner's sperm might have to be united in a lab and then implanted into your uterus. Other methods are also used. Most of these treatments are however very expensive and only available for certain patients in the public setting.

