



Health Awareness

Infertility Is More Common Than You Think

(NAPSA)—You may not realize it, but chances are you know someone who's had difficulty getting pregnant. In fact, one in eight couples experiences difficulties conceiving.

What Exactly Is Infertility?

Infertility is a medical condition that impairs the body's ability to perform the basic function of reproduction: becoming pregnant. While some couples may take longer than others to get pregnant, infertility is often diagnosed after a couple has not conceived after one year of unprotected intercourse. Women over the age of 35 are encouraged to talk with their doctor if they've had six months of unprotected intercourse without getting pregnant.

Infertility can affect both men and women. Approximately 40 percent of fertility problems are due to a female factor and 40 percent are due to a male factor. In some cases, infertility can result from problems in both partners or the cause cannot be explained.

The biggest factor that contributes to difficulties conceiving is age. A woman's fertility peaks in her mid-20s and drops off dramatically after age 35. A man's fertility also starts to decline after the age of 35.

Likewise, lifestyle choices can affect a couple's chances of getting pregnant. Smoking, excessive alcohol use, poor nutrition (either undernutrition or obesity), extreme levels of exercise and excessive stress can all contribute to infertility. But even those who avoid these risks and are considered "healthy" could still have



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issues with fertility.

In addition, a person's medical history, including a history of sexually transmitted diseases, endometriosis or diabetes, could affect their fertility. Infertility can also result from treatments that affect the reproductive organs, such as chemotherapy.

If Infertility Is So Common, Why Don't We Hear About It More Often?

Many couples are reluctant to discuss their personal struggles with family and friends. While they know their loved ones support them, some couples may find it hard to acknowledge and talk about their difficulty becoming pregnant. But couples may find their friends and family can provide much needed support throughout their fertility journey, especially as they consider seeking professional help.

Why Should We Talk About Infertility?

Many are unaware of how common infertility is, and more important, what they can do about it. The facts about infertility, risk factors and treatments can be hard to distinguish among the many myths.

Talking to a health care professional about concerns and options is the best step to take. There are treatments for infertility, and the sooner a couple receives treatment, the better chance they'll have at a successful pregnancy.

What Can I Do?

Ask Your Doctor

Whether you or someone you know is having problems conceiving, it's important to arm yourself with the facts about potential risk factors and treatment options. Your primary care physician or ob-gyn can also provide you with information about treatment options. If you're experiencing difficulties becoming pregnant, your primary care physician or ob-gyn may refer you to a fertility specialist, known as a reproductive endocrinologist (RE). REs have special training and expertise in helping couples to conceive.

Get the Facts

Visiting your local library or checking out trusted online resources can provide you with accurate information. Check out FertilityJourney.com for educational fact sheets, podcasts featuring fertility experts and a quiz that can assess your risk factors for infertility.