

# Infertility Fact Sheet

## WHAT'S INSIDE:

- ❖ **What is** fertility?
- ❖ **What is** infertility?
- ❖ What **causes infertility** in **women**?
- ❖ What **causes infertility** in **men**?
- ❖ What **decreases** the **chance** of getting **pregnant**?
- ❖ Are there **tests** for infertility?
- ❖ Is there a way to **increase** the **chance** of **getting pregnant**?
- ❖ How is infertility **treated**?

## SOURCES:

National Center for Biotechnology Information

- ❖ [Infertility](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- ❖ [Infertility](#)

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

- ❖ [Infertility](#)

Mayo Clinic

- ❖ [Infertility](#)

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

- ❖ [Evaluating infertility](#)

World Health Organization

- ❖ [Infertility](#)



### What is fertility?

- ❖ Fertility means being able to become pregnant (conceive).
- ❖ Becoming pregnant involves many steps. The steps must work just right for a woman to get pregnant.
- ❖ About 8 out of 10 couples will get pregnant within 12 months of trying.



### What is infertility?

- ❖ Infertility is defined as not being able to get pregnant after having regular intercourse (sex) without birth control for one year (or after six months if a woman is 35 or older).
- ❖ Infertility is common. About one of every 10 women in the United States younger than 45 years old has infertility.
- ❖ Primary infertility is when a couple has never been able to have their own biological child.
- ❖ Secondary infertility happens when a couple previously had a child, but can't get pregnant again.
- ❖ Infertility can be caused by problems in the woman, the man, or both.



### What causes infertility in women?

- ❖ Ovulation problems.
  - Ovulation is the release of the egg from the woman's ovary.
  - It happens one time per month, about half way between one menstrual period and the next.
  - Without normal ovulation, a woman can't get pregnant.
  - A woman with ovulation problems may have periods that don't come on time each month. Or she may skip periods.
  - Ovulation problems can be caused by hormone imbalances.
- ❖ Blocked fallopian tubes.
  - To get pregnant, a woman's egg must move from the ovary to the uterus (womb).
  - The egg moves through the fallopian tube. The fallopian tube is where the egg and sperm meet (fertilization).



- If the fallopian tube gets blocked due to infection, surgery, or other problems, then sperm cannot reach the egg to fertilize it .
- ❖ Uterus shape.
  - The fertilized egg travels to the uterus (womb), attaches to the wall of the uterus, and pregnancy starts.
  - If the shape of the uterus is not normal, the fertilized egg may not attach to the uterine wall, and the woman won't get pregnant.
- ❖ Fibroids.
  - Fibroids are lumps of extra uterine muscle that can form on the inside of the uterus.
  - Fibroids can make it hard for the fertilized egg to attach to the uterus.

### How is infertility treated?

- ❖ Infertility is treated in many ways.
- ❖ Many cases are treated with drugs or surgery.
- ❖ The treatment depends on the cause of infertility.
- ❖ A couple should see a doctor if they have not been able to get pregnant after 12 months of having sex regularly without birth control. If the woman is age 35 or older, they should see a doctor after 6 months of trying to get pregnant.



### What causes infertility in men?

- ❖ Varicocele (VAIR-ih-koh-seel).
  - A varicocele happens when a vein on a man's testicles gets too large.
  - The big veins heat the testicles.
  - The heat damages the sperm.
- ❖ Problems with sperm.
  - If a man makes too few sperm or none at all the woman can't get pregnant.
  - If the sperm don't move right they won't meet (fertilize) the egg.
- ❖ Blocked tubes.



- Sperm travel in tubes from the man's testicles to the penis.
- If the tubes are blocked, the sperm can't get out to fertilize the egg, the woman can't get pregnant.



### What decreases the chance of getting pregnant?

In women:

- ❖ Age 30 or older (at age 40 there is a big drop in the chance of getting pregnant).
- ❖ Smoking.
- ❖ Heavy alcohol use.
- ❖ Stress.
- ❖ Poor diet.
- ❖ Too much athletic training.
- ❖ Overweight or underweight.
- ❖ Sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- ❖ Health problems that cause changes in the hormones in a woman's body.

In men:

- ❖ Age (over age 40 there are more fertility problems)
- ❖ Smoking.
- ❖ Heavy alcohol use.
- ❖ Drugs.
- ❖ Environmental toxins, including pesticides and lead.
- ❖ Health problems such as mumps or hormone problems.
- ❖ Radiation treatment and chemotherapy.



### Are there tests for infertility?

- ❖ In many cases, tests can help find the cause of infertility.
  - Tests for women and men:
    - Physical exam.
    - Questions about medical problems in the past.
  - Tests for women:
    - Pelvic exam.
    - Ovulation predictor tests.
    - Imaging tests to check the shape of the uterus and fallopian tubes.
    - Blood tests to check hormone levels.
    - Laparoscopy (a procedure where a small needle is inserted into the abdomen (belly area) to check the fallopian tubes, ovaries and uterus).



- Basal body temperature charting (checking the temperature every morning to check for ovulation).
- Tests for men:
  - Semen analysis to check the number, shape, and movement of sperm.



### **Is there a way to increase the chance of getting pregnant?**

- ❖ Having sex near the time of ovulation is the best way to increase the chance of getting pregnant.
- ❖ Ovulation occurs about 2 weeks before the next period starts.
- ❖ If a woman gets her period every 28 days, ovulation happens about 14 days after she starts her period.
- ❖ The couple should have sex at least every 3 days between the 10th and 18th day after the woman starts her period.
- ❖ They should make sure to have sex during the 3 days before ovulation.

