

Trying to get Pregnant?

fertility
NEW ZEALAND

Head Office
0800 333 306
Ph:03 332 7790

What Is Infertility?

Infertility is defined as an inability to conceive after one year of trying, or an inability to carry a pregnancy to a live birth.

The problem is common. Approximately 1 in 6 couples in New Zealand experience infertility. A number of these couples will require some form of medical assistance to achieve a pregnancy.

If you have been trying unsuccessfully to conceive, and you are concerned, then it is worth seeking medical advice.

Couples that should seek help early are;

- **Women who have irregular periods, which is a sign that ovulation may not be occurring**
- **Women who have had pelvic surgery (to ovaries, tubes or appendix) or pelvic infection which may have damaged fallopian tubes**
- **Women over 35 years of age**
- **Men who have had genital surgery, infection or significant trauma**

If none of these factors exist, 80% of couples can expect to get pregnant in the first year of trying. A normally fertile couple in their 20's have on average a 25% chance of conceiving each month.

Infertility is often experienced as an on-going grief, a grief in which many couples feel alone and isolated.

People experiencing secondary infertility after one or more natural children may also experience similar grief.

Help is Available!

Over the past 20 years, there have been significant advances in treatment for those with fertility problems for many.

However, these treatments can take quite some time to complete and do involve tests for both males and females. This period of waiting, investigation and treatment can prove quite stressful.

Public treatment

After initial tests with your local GP, you may be referred to the local hospital or a private local specialist. After further investigation, you may be referred to a Fertility Clinic; these are generally located in the main cities. You also have the opportunity to be placed on a Public Waiting list. Those who are eligible for publicly

funded treatment receive one fully funded IVF or ICSI cycle including subsequent frozen embryo transfers OR 4 cycles of either Artificial Insemination with Partner's Sperm, Ovulation Induction or Donor Insemination. Your specialist will discuss with you which is the most appropriate treatment option for you. Waiting time is generally less than 6 months.

Private treatment

In both the North and South Islands, you have the choice of private clinics for treatment and consultations. You will need to pay for private treatment, but in general there is no waiting period.

For more information, ask your GP or local support group for a list of accredited Fertility Clinics near you.

Common causes of infertility

MEN (approx 40%)

Male fertility problems can be caused by abnormalities in sperm numbers, movement or shape. However, the causes of many sperm problems remain unknown. Causes could be:

- Failed vasectomy reversal
- Retrograde ejaculation
- Blocked ducts
- Absence of vas deferens
- Undescended testes in childhood
- Autoimmune (antibody) disorders

WOMEN (approx. 40%)

Female fertility problems commonly include:

- Tubal problems
- Endometriosis
- Disorders of ovulation
- Polycystic ovarian disease
- Frequent miscarriage
- Hormonal problems
- Autoimmune (antibody) disorders

Unexplained Infertility

Up to 20% of couples (including those experiencing secondary infertility) will have no explainable cause for their infertility.

There is rarely a quick or simple answer to infertility problems. Infertility is not something you catch and in most cases, is not preventable.

Helpful Suggestions

If you are concerned about trying to start a family, or if you have a child and are having difficulty conceiving a second time, below are

some suggestions that may help you during the "getting answers" process.

- Take a list of questions with you to your health professional, and write down the answers. (Sometimes your anxiety about the cause of your infertility can cause you to forget what you wanted to ask, or what the answers were)
- Ensure you are referred to a Reproductive Health Specialist or Clinic when necessary; they have specific experience in fertility treatment
- Ask for copies of all your test results, and keep them in a folder at home, as there may come a time when you may need a copy of the information
- Ask your doctor to explain what the tests and the results mean
- Ask your specialist to keep your GP filled in on what is happening
- Try to be assertive, and let your GP or Specialist know honestly how concerned you are
- Seek out information for yourself—join fertilityNZ! Self knowledge assists you to help yourself and understand more fully what is happening
- Ask your GP to organise blood tests and sperm tests for you and your partner, BEFORE you are referred to the specialist.

Talking about fertility problems can help...

One of the greatest ways to deal with infertility is to talk about it. This is not always easy or comfortable. At some point during infertility treatment, or investigation, you may experience a state of crisis.

This crisis in turn, may lead to feelings of isolation and despair. This can place a strain on your relationship. You may also feel alone and not have people to talk to who understand the experience of infertility.

Due to the private nature of infertility, it is difficult to know who to contact.

fertilityNZ has an informative web site with a chat room facility and an 0800 number you can call for information and support. It can also put you in touch with your nearest local group.

Linda Tully, NZRCN,

Fertility Associates Auckland

Copyright © fertilityNZ 2004

PO Box 12049, Beckenham, Christchurch 8042