



Your copy to take home

THE Dandelion

THE NEWSLETTER OF FERTILITY NEW ZEALAND, A REGISTERED CHARITY SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH FERTILITY ISSUES

NOVEMBER 2014

Fertility NZ's website better than ever!

VISIT US NOW!

The Fertility NZ website has been re-vamped and re-released! It is the hub of what Fertility NZ offers - and your essential resource for information related to fertility.

WWW.FERTILITYNZ.ORG.NZ



We've updated the look and feel and also improved the functionality and access so that you, our members, can easily find and use our resources.

• Information

Did you know that we have a series of 20 information videos? The topics range from 'Infertility: The NZ Framework' through to 'Male Infertility' and 'Living Childfree'. The video series features

professionals giving advice, together with our members sharing their experiences and our Ambassadors, Jay-Jay and Dom Harvey, giving guidance. There is also a series of 22 fact sheet leaflets, which are downloadable as PDFs. The new 'Fertility Fitness' section outlines how you can maximise your chances of a healthy pregnancy, via natural conception or ART.

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How do environmental factors affect your fertility?



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PIP stands for Pipelle for Pregnancy





Welcome Notes

Welcome to this seventh edition of *The Dandelion* newsletter from Fertility NZ.

Have you visited our re-released website yet? We think the new site is more user-friendly, and easier to access the wealth of information and resources. We hope you agree!

Thanks to everyone who supported the Empty Prams campaign over the last six months. The campaign raised awareness of the low government funding of fertility treatment (compared with Australia). Several politicians voiced their support (sadly, none were National!). Our next step will be to discuss the issue with the new Minister of Health, Jonathan Coleman.

Recently, Fertility NZ held its first workshop focussing on donor conception. Entitled 'Single Mums: how to talk to your donor-conceived children about their origins', the session included advice on how to approach this subject at various ages. Fertility NZ plans to extend its

support and information in the area of donor conception (across all types of family building). If you are interested, or have any particular topics you would like to see addressed, please let us know.

Loula George, Executive Committee Member, shares her expertise on preconception health on page 4. Her article focusses on the impact of environmental factors on fertility and the health of the pregnancy and baby.

Fertility NZ exists to support you, and any feedback you have on the information, support and advocacy we provide is always welcome. I would like to thank you for taking the time to read *The Dandelion* and look forward to continuing to provide support over the coming months.

Cheers
Nigel McKerras – President

Joining Fertility NZ

Are you a member of Fertility NZ? Registration is free-of-charge and can be done online through the Support section of our website. Benefits of Membership include:

- We'll keep you informed of information events and support groups in your area (if you elect to receive these emails from us)
- You receive Updates from us including *The Dandelion* newsletter (if you elect to receive updates)
- Ability to participate in the Forums on our website
- You support all the valuable work we do for all New Zealanders experiencing fertility issues. We represent the voice of NZers impacted by infertility – and the more members we have, the stronger our voice.

About Fertility New Zealand

Fertility New Zealand is committed to supporting, advocating for and educating all people who face infertility challenges at all stages of their journey and beyond.

Fertility NZ was founded in 1990 and is a registered charity. It operates on a national level and much of its work is undertaken by dedicated volunteers. Fertility NZ provides assistance for people with fertility issues through the following channels:

- **Support** A network of regular support gatherings, workshops and contact groups throughout the country; an 0800 line and email address for enquiries, and infertility forums on our website where Members can provide support to one another.
- **Information** Fertility NZ's website www.fertilitynz.org.nz is the focal point of information; informative fact sheet brochures are available for Members and through Clinics; regular publication of *The Dandelion* newsletter and email updates to Members; conferences and information events.

- **Advocacy** Representing the voice of people affected by infertility on medical, ethical and policy issues.

Our vision

FertilityNZ has a vision of a 'fertility friendly' and fertility-aware New Zealand where:

- Infertility is recognised, understood and supported;
- All men and women faced with the medical condition of infertility have access to appropriate, timely and fully-funded medical treatment;
- Men and women have all the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their fertility;
- Young New Zealanders learn about fertility preservation;
- Fertility and all alternative forms of whanau and family-building are respected and valued.

Will you share your story for Fertility Week 2015?

Planning is underway for Fertility Week 2015 and an important part of the campaign will be 'real life' people sharing their experiences. We are looking for couples and singles who have had a journey in selected areas and would be willing to share their story to help others. If your journey has involved: PCOS, Endometriosis, Male Factor, Recurrent Miscarriage or Unexplained Infertility (or a combination), please call us on 0800 333 306 or email support@fertilitynz.org.nz

FNZ website: **better than ever!**

◀ From page 1

• Support

The Support area outlines the support groups and events happening around the country. Thanks to a wonderful network of volunteers, FNZ now offers regular support and coffee groups in 11 centres. Check out the Support section to see what is happening in your area.

• Forums

The revamped Forums are now categorised to reflect different journeys / areas of discussion. Some of the forums are 'Trying to Conceive', 'Long term

IVFers' and 'Donors/Recipients'. Note that you need to be a Member of FNZ to participate in the Forums. Register today and support all the work we do!

• News

The 'news and research' section outlines articles that may be of interest on your fertility journey. Feel free to post your comments.

We hope you find our revamped website useful and easy to navigate. We welcome any comments you have. See you there!



Frozen storage **deadline** looms

On 22nd November 2014, the ten year storage limit imposed by the HART Act, for gametes and embryos comes into force.

Legislation imposes a ten year storage limit for frozen sperm, eggs, embryos and other reproductive material (such as testicular tissue).

It is important to note that the storage period is counted from the earliest freeze date. This means that embryos which have been frozen for five years but were created using sperm frozen five years earlier, would be at the end of their storage time.

Fertility Associates and Fertility

Plus have been trying to track down all patients with frozen material approaching this time limit. There are still many couples and singles who have been unable to be contacted.

An application can be made to the Ethics Committee for Assisted Reproductive Technology (ECART) to extend storage for up to 10 years. For material that will have been frozen for at least 10 years by November 22nd, the application must be received and considered by ECART before November 22nd. However, in the first instance, patients should contact the clinic where their material is stored:

• Fertility Plus:

fertlab@adhb.govt.nz

• Fertility Associates:

extendedstorage@fertilityassociates.co.nz

If you know someone who had fertility treatment eight or more years ago and may have frozen material in storage, please contact them and ask them to urgently contact their clinic. Perhaps they have moved overseas or moved town. The clinics are concerned about the patients they have been unable to contact, and that they may be unaware of the situation facing their frozen assets.

Environmental factors and their impact on fertility

By Loula George, Executive
Committee Member, Fertility NZ
and Director, Mother-Well



We are exposed to chemicals every day; in the air that we breathe, the food we eat, products we put on our body, cleaning products, products we use in the garden and from the cars we drive. Chemicals are not intrinsically bad for us; in fact our bodies are made up of millions of different chemicals. However, humans have managed to produce hundreds-of-thousands of synthetic chemicals and heavy metals that we need to have an awareness of and try to avoid in our day-to-day lives. Some scientists estimate that we may contact over 150,000 toxic man-made chemicals during our daily routines.

In New Zealand today, one in six couples have trouble conceiving and completing a successful pregnancy. There is growing evidence that these high and increasing fertility statistics for both men and women may be due in part to environmental toxicity. Scientific studies are linking endocrine disorders to chemicals in our environment.

These substances may not only cause conception and miscarriage problems but may also affect the health of the child and predisposes him/her to chronic disease later in life.

Endocrine disruptors are hormone altering chemicals. They play havoc in our bodies by:

- Increasing or decreasing the production of certain hormones
- Imitating hormones
- Turning one hormone into another
- Interfering with hormone signaling
- Telling cells to die prematurely
- Competing with essential nutrients
- Binding to essential hormones
- Accumulating in organs that produce hormones

In the box on the right is a list of some of the worst hormone disruptors that we need to be aware of. The exposure to these should be lowered during the important three month preconception period when the egg and sperm are maturing and developing and are most susceptible to damage from these chemicals; and also during pregnancy when the foetal tissues and organs undergo critical periods of development. Critical periods coincide with periods of rapid cell division.

'Programming' describes the process whereby a stimulus or insult (i.e. exposure to these toxins/chemicals) at a critical period of development has lasting or lifelong effects.

What you can do to reduce environmental toxicity when you are trying to conceive and throughout pregnancy and breastfeeding

- Store your food in glass containers whenever possible. Don't microwave in plastic - use glass or ceramic instead. Look for BPA-free bottles for your infants and BPA-free water bottles for your children and yourself.
- Buy and eat organic produce and free-range, organic foods where possible, to reduce your exposure to pesticides, GMOs and fertilisers. This especially applies to animal produce (meat, chicken, eggs) and full-cream

dairy products, as these may contain higher levels of some pollutants. However, this is not always an option, so ensuring that fruit and vegetables are washed thoroughly is a good alternative.

- Avoid the use of pesticides in the home or garden, or on your family pets. Examples of common things to avoid: Mortein, garden sprays, flea treatments, mosquito repellants that contain Deet etc.
- Eat low-mercury fish. Avoid large fish e.g tuna, shark, swordfish, orange roughy, king mackerel, crustaceans (often polluted) and raw fish (may contain bacteria).
- Say 'no' to mercury amalgams.
- Throw out your Teflon pots and pans and instead use safer cooking materials like ceramic, stainless steel and glass.

The Baddies to avoid

BPA (Bisphenol A) – used to harden polycarbonate plastics, found in plastic containers, canned food, white dental fillings.

Phthalates – plasticisers, used in the production of plastics. Found in cosmetics, perfumes, aerosols, paints, air fresheners, shampoos, skin moisturisers, nail polishes, shower curtains, plastic toys, fragrances.

PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) – fat soluble, accumulate in our body fat and in animal fats we consume. Found in fluorescent lighting, electrical equipment, hydraulic fluids.

Parabens – chemical additives widely used in cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and food production as preservatives, antibacterial and antifungal agents.

Volatile Solvents – inhaled as fumes or vapours. Found in gas, exhaust, paints, polyurethanes, dry cleaning chemicals.

PFA's (perfluorinated compounds) – these are persistent organic pollutants that make products stain, grease and water repellent.



Found in paper food containers, fast food wrappers, Teflon, Scotchgard.

PBDEs (polybrominated diphenyl ethers) – flame retardants found in home and building materials, insulation, cars, furnishing, bedding, textiles, e.g. pyjamas.

Toxic metals – e.g. aluminium, arsenic, lead, cadmium, mercury.

Pesticides and insecticides – used in the home, garden and sprayed on our fruit and vegetables.

Food additives – e.g. artificial sweeteners, high fructose corn syrup, MSG, trans fats, food dyes, sodium sulfite, sodium nitrate, sulphur dioxide, potassium bromate.

Reduce the number of cosmetics and other personal care products you use. Skin care products are notorious for containing many dangerous chemicals.

- Avoid processed foods and become a food label detective. Avoid artificial food additives of all kinds, including MSG and artificial sweeteners. Artificial sweeteners are found in most chewing gums, diet foods and drinks, and some children's medications.
- Avoid artificial fragrances in air fresheners, fabric softeners, perfumes, cheap candles, and other synthetic fragrances. Use fresh flowers, essential oils and natural alternatives instead.
- Reduce the number of cosmetics and other personal care products you use. Aim to switch to natural brands of personal care items: including shampoo, toothpaste, deodorants and cosmetics. Skin care products are notorious for containing many dangerous chemicals. See the Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep Cosmetic Safety Database www.cosmeticsdatabase.com
- Carefully consider the toys you choose for your children, as children like to 'mouth' things. Avoid toys that have been painted overseas, plastics, adhesives, lip-glosses, nail polishes etc.
- When renovating your home, look for 'green' toxin-free alternatives in lieu of regular paints, varnishes and floor coverings. Use low VOC (volatile organic compound) paints, varnishes and sealants (available from your hardware store) and avoid formaldehyde resins. Ideally aim to finish the renovations, polish the floor boards, and paint the baby room well before you conceive. See www.safersolutions.org.au for more advice on healthy home renovations.
- Reduce the number of household cleaners you use and only use natural cleaning products in your home. Most health food stores and many supermarkets will have these available.

Although they are currently quite expensive, there are urine tests that can detect exposure of particular chemicals that act as endocrine disruptors, e.g. organo phosphates. Hair can be tested for heavy metal exposure. Our best advice is to become aware of the environmental factors around you, and particularly during preconception and pregnancy.

Donor Conception workshop

Fertility NZ recently held a workshop entitled "Single Mums: how to talk to your donor conceived children about their origins". It was an informal and interactive workshop specifically for single mothers of children through donor conception. Facilitated by Fiona McDonald, Executive Committee Member of Fertility New Zealand and Counsellor at Fertility Plus and Repromed, the session provided practical advice on

communicating genetic origins with donor conceived children.

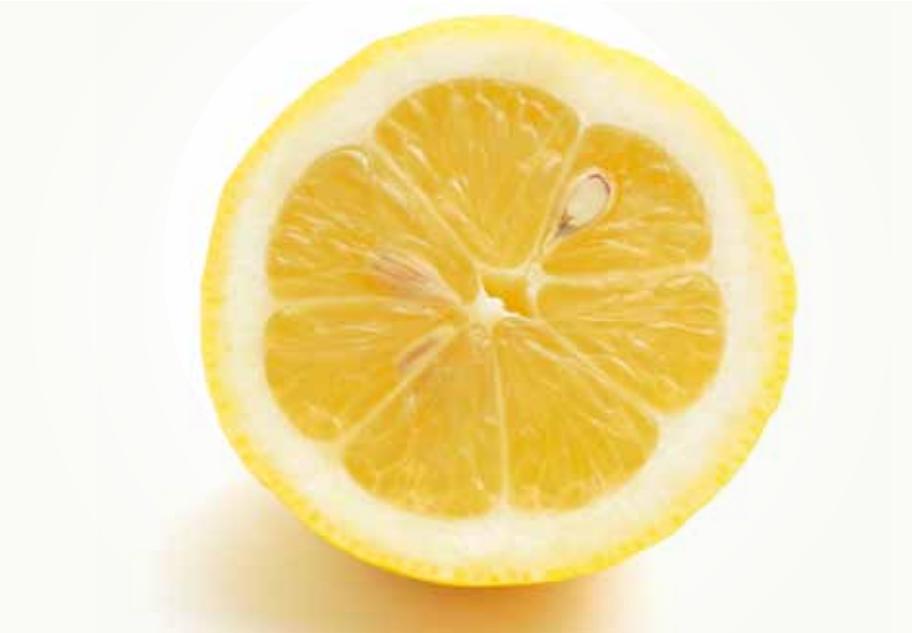
If you would like a copy of the notes from this meeting, email support@fertilitynz.org.nz

Fertility NZ plans to deliver more information and support in the area of donor conception (for all types of families). If this is an area of interest to you, please let us know the area(s) that we could add value.

Support Group Guidelines for Engagement

Fertility NZ support groups are held regularly in 11 centres around the country. Although the format and style of group varies between regions, the guidelines below apply to all FNZ support groups, coffee groups and events.

- Confidentiality is paramount. We will not share your name with others outside the group.
 - We expect all participants to respect others by keeping anything shared in the group, within the group.
 - Your facilitator may not acknowledge you if they see you outside the group.
 - Respect others' opinions.
 - Respect that there will be differences between everyone's experiences.
 - Our facilitators welcome any feedback or suggestions as to how the group could be improved.
 - Anger or sadness are okay – as long as you are respectful to others.
 - There is no expectation that you return next time, if it isn't right for you.
 - The only exception to confidentiality is if your life or someone else's is at risk.
 - The role of the facilitator is to assist in managing group discussion and may be to provide a framework for the sessions (this depends on the type of group in your region). Facilitators are not trained counsellors or medical professionals and so may refer participants to relevant professionals (with your permission/consent) if this is considered necessary to best provide information or support.
 - Our support groups are places for gaining support, sharing experiences and learning coping mechanisms, not for gaining technical / medical information. Refer any questions to our 0800 line, email or website.
- Research shows that in-person support offers significant benefit to mind and body. Fertility New Zealand exists to support people experiencing infertility and we welcome you into our network of support groups, coffee groups, contact groups and events.



The PIP Studies

The Pipelle for Pregnancy (PIP) studies are a new set of research trials underway in Auckland. The purpose of the studies is to investigate whether performing an endometrial pipelle procedure can help women to get pregnant.

The PIP studies are three separate trials of endometrial pipelle sampling in different groups of participants:

- PIP-IVF (in women undergoing IVF/ICSI/embryo transfer)
- PIP-UE (in couples with unexplained infertility)
- PIP-PCOS (in couples with subfertility related to polycystic ovarian syndrome)

All three PIP studies are randomised controlled trials. This means that women who take part in the study are randomly allocated to either undergo the pipelle procedure, or not.

Different eligibility criteria apply to each study. If you are interested in taking part in one of the PIP studies, please contact the PIP study coordinator who can assess your eligibility.

Why are we running the PIP studies?

Researchers have found that performing an endometrial pipelle sample in women who had unsuccessful IVF cycles increased their chance of pregnancy in the next IVF cycle.

However, it is not known whether sampling is also helpful for women on their first or second IVF cycle, or who are having a frozen-thawed embryo

transfer. It is also not known whether endometrial pipelle sampling could be beneficial in couples with unexplained infertility, or subfertility related to PCOS, who are trying to conceive with sexual intercourse.

Endometrial pipelle sampling may increase the chance of pregnancy in these women too.

The three PIP studies aim to assess whether pipelle sampling improves pregnancy and live birth rates in the three different groups of participants above.

How does endometrial pipelle sampling increase pregnancy rates?

It is believed that endometrial sampling may increase the chance of pregnancy because it disturbs the lining of the womb and causes a small wound-healing response. Biological factors which are then released due to this response are thought to be helpful for implantation of an embryo into the lining of the womb. As implantation of an embryo is the first step in establishing a pregnancy, endometrial pipelle sampling might lead to a higher chance of pregnancy.

The pipelle procedure

Endometrial pipelle sampling (also known as endometrial biopsy, injury or scratching) is a common procedure often used to collect endometrial samples from women.

The pipelle procedure is similar to having a smear test done. A speculum is inserted into the vagina. Then a thin plastic sampler (the pipelle) is inserted gently through the cervix and into the womb. The pipelle procedure takes 1–2 minutes and involves gently moving the pipelle back and forth to obtain a small sample from the lining of the womb.

Some temporary discomfort or cramping may be experienced during the procedure.

Participating in the PIP studies

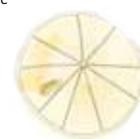
Taking part in the PIP study offers women and couples a 50% chance of undergoing a new procedure (endometrial pipelle sampling) that may help them to get pregnant.

Participants in the PIP study are also providing researchers with important information about endometrial pipelle sampling, including whether this procedure is beneficial for different subfertile groups of women and couples. By being involved in the trial, participants will also contribute to helping subfertile women and couples in the future to receive the best possible chance of having a baby.

Taking part in the PIP studies is completely voluntary, and participants who take part are free to withdraw from the study at any time. There is no cost to take part in the PIP studies.

You can find more information on the website: www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/pip

If you have any questions about the PIP studies, would like some more information, or are interested in taking part, please get in touch with the PIP study coordinator: Sarah Lensen, pip@auckland.ac.nz, 09 923 9487.



PIP STUDIES
— PIPELLE FOR PREGNANCY —

noticeboard

Upcoming events

NOVEMBER

Monday 3 November: Support Group, Timaru
Tuesday 4 November: Support Group, Dunedin
Sunday 9 November: Support Group, Hawke's Bay
Tuesday 18 November: Casual Coffee Group, Auckland
Saturday 22 November: Secondary Infertility Coffee Group, Auckland

DECEMBER

Monday 1 December: Support Group, Timaru
Tuesday 2 December: Support Group, Dunedin
Sunday 14 December: Support Group, Hawkes Bay
Tuesday 16 December: Casual Coffee Group, Auckland
Saturday 20 December: Secondary Infertility Coffee Group, Auckland

JANUARY

Saturday 24 January: Secondary Infertility Coffee Group, Auckland

FEBRUARY

Monday 2 February: Support Group, Timaru
Tuesday 3 February: Support Group, Dunedin
Saturday 28 February: Secondary Infertility Coffee Group, Auckland

MARCH

Tuesdays 3, 10, 17 March: Contact Group, Auckland
Saturday 28 March: Secondary Infertility Coffee Group, Auckland

For more information, contact your local representative (see right) or email support@fertilitynz.org.nz

Local information

How can we help you in your area?

Fertility NZ Local Groups

Auckland

aucklandsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz
secondarysupport@fertilitynz.org.nz
(secondary infertility)

Casual Coffee Group (Auckland)
casualcoffeegroup@gmail.com

Hamilton

hamiltonsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Tauranga

taurangasupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Rotorua

rotoruasupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Gisborne

gisbornesupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Hawke's Bay

hawkesbaysupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Wellington

wellingtonsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Christchurch

christchurchsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Timaru

timarusupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Central Otago

centralotagosupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Dunedin

dunedin-support@fertilitynz.org.nz

Donor Conception

donorconception@fertilitynz.org.nz

New support groups in the South

Thanks to lovely volunteers in Dunedin and Cromwell, there are now support groups meeting regularly in those locations. The Dunedin group meets on the first Tuesday of every month at A+ Physio, 40 Filleul Street and is open to women experiencing any kind of fertility issue. The Central Otago group meets on an ad-hoc basis and is open to women and men. They currently meet in Cromwell, with the possibility of rotating the meeting location between Queenstown, Cromwell and Alexandra, as suits.

Both these groups are very casual – just drop in for a coffee, there are no expectations! There is no cost to attend. For more information, contact: dunedin-support@fertilitynz.org.nz or centralotagosupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

This material is supported by way of an educational grant from Merck Sharp & Dohme (New Zealand) Limited. The information submitted is intended to assist health care professionals and patients in forming their own conclusions and making decisions, but may not represent a comprehensive listing of all available information on the subject. The views and opinions expressed by the individual presenters do not necessarily represent the opinion of Merck Sharp & Dohme (New Zealand) Limited.

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