

Infertility

Infertility: Myth vs. Reality

Infertility has traditionally been defined as failure to conceive after one year of unprotected intercourse. It affects approximately 15 to 18% of couples in their childbearing years.

Previously, it was thought that becoming pregnant was nothing to worry about until age 35. Today when it comes to infertility, 25 is the new 35. Currently 44 percent of couples seeking reproductive assistance are under the age of 35 (according to the C.D.C. National Survey of Family Growth.)

Female fertility peaks between the ages of 23 and 31. Around the age of 31, fertility begins to decrease rapidly, by 3% per year, until a woman reaches age 35. As a woman ages, the eggs in the ovaries lose their "vitality" and their ability to fertilize decreases every year. Approximately 25 percent of women age 35 or older will have trouble becoming pregnant.

"**Male Factor**" accounts for 40 percent of infertility. Although many men can father a child in their 70's, sperm *quality* declines with age. In order to promote healthy sperm men should nix anything that can overheat the testicles such as soaking in hot tubs, wearing tight underwear and holding a hot laptop computer in their lap. Contrary to popular myths, daily intercourse can actually **increase** sperm quality. Another myth is that *birth control pills will decrease fertility*. Actually there is some evidence that women who go off the pill have a slightly higher incidence of twins if they conceive the first month. The pill can also retard the incidence of endometriosis, which is a known cause of infertility.

Myth #3 is that having a baby at a young age guarantees a couple of having another one in the future. Actually, one out of ten women will have trouble conceiving a second child.

Myth #4 is that abortion alters fertility. Abortion plays no role in future conception unless scarring of the uterus has occurred.

Finally, contrary to popular wisdom, *stress and diet* play little if any role in fertility. While a healthy diet, including 400 micrograms of folic acid daily, is important, no experts think diet will change fertility status. As far as stress is concerned, it is probably the opposite. Stress doesn't cause infertility but not being able to conceive certainly causes much stress in a couples relationship.

Dr. Jamieson is board certified and has been treating infertility problems for over twenty years. His practice is devoted solely to gynecologic problems and infertility. He has the time to devote his full attention to women with these distressing issues.