

preserving your fertility

AVOID ENVIRONMENTAL AND WORKPLACE TOXINS.

The following can impact your reproductive system: nitrous oxide (e.g., anesthesia, fertilizers, car exhaust), herbicides (e.g., weed killers), solvents (e.g., paint thinners) and fish high in mercury may impact your reproductive system.

DON'T SMOKE CIGARETTES. Recent studies suggest that cigarette smoking may affect ovarian function.

LIMIT ALCOHOL INTAKE. Alcohol can impact estrogen levels and ovulation.

BEFORE ANY PELVIC SURGERY, TALK TO YOUR SURGEON. If you are going to have pelvic surgery for fibroids, fallopian tube repair, or to remove endometriosis or scar tissue, talk to your surgeon about the type of surgery that gives you the best chance to preserve your fertility: laparoscopy, surgery done through small incisions near the groin; or hysteroscopy, surgery done through the vagina.

For Men

Infertility is not just a woman's problem. About one-third of infertility is caused by male factor and one-third of cases involve medical problems with both partners. The following is a partial list of risk factors to male fertility:

Hernia repair; undescended testicle(s); history of prostatitis or genital infection; mumps after puberty; presence of varicocele; scrotal injury; and hormonal imbalances.

Preserving Fertility in Men

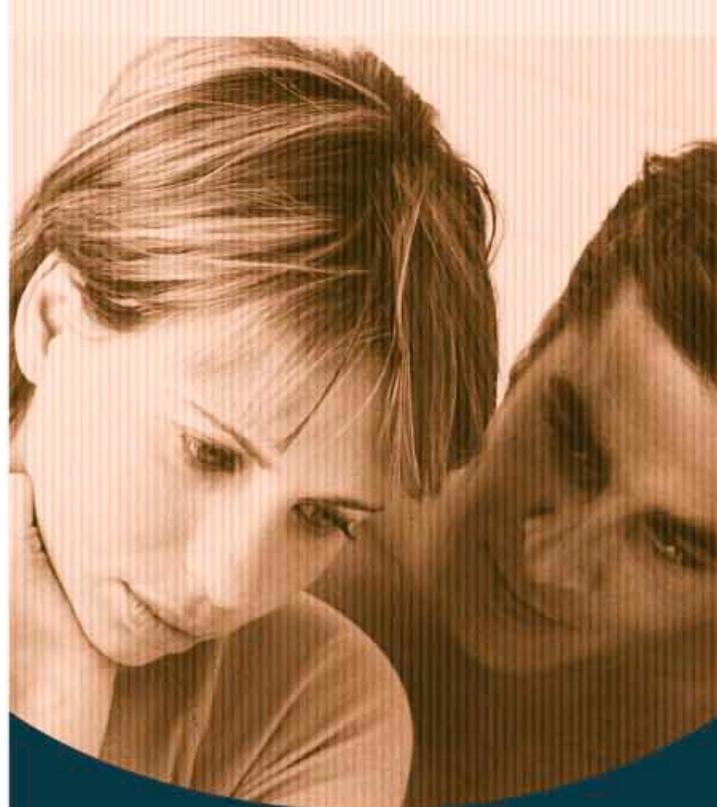
Men should avoid the following to assist in preserving their fertility:

EXPOSURE TO TOXIC SUBSTANCES OR HAZARDS ON THE JOB. The metals lead, cadmium (e.g., batteries, plastics, electroplated metals), and mercury (found in thermometers, scientific instruments, etc.); ethylene oxide (e.g., antifreeze, adhesives, detergents); vinyl chloride (used in rubber, paper and glass production); radioactivity and x-ray.

MEN SHOULD ALSO AVOID: Cigarette or marijuana smoking; heavy alcohol consumption; prescription drugs for ulcers, psoriasis, gout or Crohn's disease; calcium channel blockers for hypertension; exposure of the genitals to elevated temperatures, hot baths, whirlpools or steam rooms.

How RESOLVE can help:

RESOLVE offers a variety of resources. Visit us online at www.resolve.org to interact on our bulletin boards, participate in an online chat or access our wide selection of literature. Or, talk to a peer counselor on our toll-free HelpLine at 888.623.0744 or email us at info@resolve.org.



RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association, established in 1974, is a dynamic organization with the only established, nationwide network of chapters promoting reproductive health and working to ensure equal access to all family building options for both men and women.

The mission of RESOLVE is to provide timely, compassionate support and information to people who are experiencing infertility and to increase awareness of infertility issues through public education and advocacy.

For more information, please contact RESOLVE at 617.623.1156 or info@resolve.org. Or call our toll-free HelpLine at 888.623.0744, Monday - Friday, 9 AM - NOON and 1 PM - 4 PM, ET; Monday evenings, 7 PM - 10 PM, ET.

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RESOLVE, 7910 WOODMONT AVENUE, SUITE 1350
BETHESDA, MD 20814 | PHONE 301.652.8585 | FAX 301.652.9375
HELPLINE 888.623.0744 | WWW.RESOLVE.ORG



resolve
THE NATIONAL INFERTILITY ASSOCIATION

Are you a woman who plans to start a family some day?

It is common to assume that you will be able to have a baby when you want to. But six million Americans are faced with infertility, the inability to get pregnant after one year of unprotected, well-timed intercourse, or the inability to carry a pregnancy to a live birth.

Most women expect they will get pregnant and have a family when they want to. But there are many things that impact fertility, some of which you have control over, and some you do not. The following factors may put you at risk for a fertility problem:

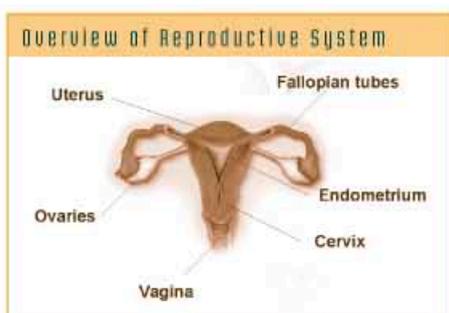
YOU ARE OVER 35-YEARS-OLD. A woman in her late 30s is about 30% less fertile than she was in her early 20s, even if she is ovulating and has regular menstrual periods. A woman age 40 or older may have a difficult time getting pregnant and in some cases may need to use assisted reproductive technologies (ART) with eggs from a younger donor. The rate of miscarriage is high for women age 40 or older who get pregnant with their own eggs.

YOUR MOTHER TOOK DES (DIETHYLSTILBESTROL) DURING HER PREGNANCY WITH YOU. DES, a synthetic, oral form of estrogen, was commonly given to pregnant women from 1938–1971. Once considered a miracle drug that could prevent miscarriage or complications of pregnancy, it was later found that children exposed to DES often have an increased risk for infertility. If you were born before 1971, and your mother had a history of bleeding, miscarriage, premature birth or took medications during her pregnancy, tell your doctor.

YOU HAVE ABNORMALITIES OF THE UTERUS. Structural abnormalities may include a uterine septum or fibroids. A uterine septum is a wall of tissue that may divide the uterine cavity and may cause miscarriage. Fibroids are non-cancerous muscle growths found on the outside or middle of the uterine wall, or hanging into the uterine

cavity. Approximately two in ten premenopausal women have fibroids. Fibroids can be very small or the size of a small melon; in some women they cause pain or vaginal bleeding. Depending on their location, fibroids can cause problems with conceiving, miscarriage, pregnancy, labor or delivery, including premature birth.

YOU OR YOUR MOTHER OR SISTER HAS ENDOMETRIOSIS. Endometriosis, which may run in families, is a disease in which uterine cells live outside of the uterus: on the ovaries, fallopian tubes, and the bladder and bowel, and can cause scar tissue to develop. Endometriosis can occur in menstruating women of all ages, including teens. Women with endometriosis may or may not have symptoms, including:



heavy menstrual flow, significant cramps, diarrhea or painful bowel movements during menstruation and painful sexual intercourse. Diagnosis can only be confirmed with laparoscopy, an outpatient surgery. Laparoscopy may relieve symptoms of endometriosis, but may not cure the disease.

YOU HAVE HAD PELVIC, OVARIAN, UTERINE OR TUBAL SURGERY. Pelvic adhesions, also called scar tissue, may develop after surgery as a result of trauma to delicate tissue. Adhesions can be found between any two tissue surfaces in the pelvic cavity, including the uterus, fallopian tubes, ovaries, bowel and bladder. Adhesions may also be found inside the fallopian tubes. Surgeries that may cause pelvic adhesions include: myomectomy, the removal of a fibroid on the inside, outside or in the muscular layers of the uterine wall; removal of

endometriosis; tubal reconstruction or repair; rigorous dilation and curettage (D&C) after a miscarriage or surgery on the ovary to remove cysts.

YOU HAVE HAD SEVERAL MISCARRIAGES. By its definition, infertility includes multiple miscarriage.

YOU HAVE A CHRONIC ILLNESS. Chronic illnesses may be linked to fertility problems. For example: diabetes may make it difficult to conceive and miscarriage rates may be higher; thyroid disorder can impact fertility; and medications used to treat chronic diseases may not be safe to use when pregnant.

YOU HAVE HAD AN ABNORMAL PAP SMEAR THAT LED TO CERVICAL TREATMENT SUCH AS CRYOSURGERY OR CONE BIOPSY. This can affect cervical mucus production, which may impact sperm survival.

YOU HAVE A HISTORY OF IRREGULAR MENSTRUAL CYCLES. Most cycles are 28–30 days long with 3–5 days of bleeding. Hormone imbalance contributes to irregularities.

YOU HAVE HAD A PELVIC INFECTION. Fallopian tube disease accounts for about 20% of infertility cases. Scar tissue can form on the inside or outside of the tubes, preventing the egg from meeting the sperm and the fertilized embryo from moving down into the uterine cavity. A special X-ray called a hysterosalpingogram (HSG) can assess the health of your uterus and tubes. Tell your doctor if you have ever had: pelvic pain; unusual vaginal discharge, with or without vaginal bleeding or fever; pelvic surgery for ruptured appendix; ectopic pregnancy or an ovarian cyst.

Preserve Your Fertility

Choices you make may affect your fertility. By following the guidelines below, you can help preserve your fertility.

PRACTICE SAFE SEX. Twelve million cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as gonorrhea, syphilis or chlamydia are diagnosed in the US annually, one quarter of those in women 15–21 years old. Some STDs, like chlamydia, do not cause symptoms but can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and tubal scarring. People with many sexual partners are at the highest risk for contracting an STD. Latex condoms can reduce the risk of getting STDs. Treat infections early; all sex partners should be treated with antibiotics if one has an infection.

MAINTAIN A NORMAL BODY WEIGHT AND DIET. Excessive fatty tissue can interfere with estrogen metabolism. Significant weight loss can also affect fertility. No more than 20% of your diet should be protein.

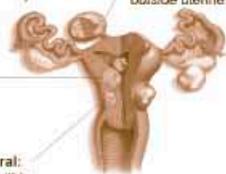
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Types of Fibroids

Submucosal:
grows into
uterine cavity

Pedunculated
subserosal: grows
from uterine wall to the
outside uterine cavity

Intramural:
occurs within
uterine wall



Pelvic Adhesions

