



AMERICAN
FERTILITY
ASSOCIATION

THE AMERICAN FERTILITY ASSOCIATION
www.TheAFA.org 888.917.3777



THE AMERICAN
FERTILITY
ASSOCIATION

INFERTILITY
PREVENTION
PROGRAM

I am tomorrow,
or some future
day, what
I establish
today. I am
today what
I established
yesterday
or some
previous day.
-James Joyce



7.3 MILLION AMERICAN WOMEN FACE SOME KIND OF DIFFICULTY WHEN TRYING TO CONCEIVE. WE ARE THE AMERICAN FERTILITY ASSOCIATION (WWW.THEAFA.ORG), AND WE WOULD LIKE TO HELP YOU AVOID BEING PART OF THAT STATISTIC.

THE MESSAGE IS SIMPLE: THERE ARE EASY CHOICES YOU CAN MAKE TODAY THAT MAY HELP YOU GET PREGNANT WHEN YOU ARE READY, AND JUST AS IMPORTANTLY, HAVE A HEALTHY BABY WHEN YOU DO GET PREGNANT.

THIS INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET WILL GIVE YOU SOME OF THE TOOLS YOU NEED TO MAKE EDUCATED DECISIONS ABOUT YOUR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, IN THE HOPES THAT YOU CAN AVOID CERTAIN TYPES OF INFERTILITY LATER ON, IF MOTHERHOOD IS A GOAL. KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR BIOLOGICAL CLOCK, STD PREVENTION AND AVOIDING ENVIRONMENTAL TOXINS CAN HELP STACK THE ODDS IN YOUR FAVOR.

THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR BIOLOGICAL CLOCK

- First and foremost - It's real. The number of ostensibly enlightened people who are sketchy on the basics of baby-making is stunning. The American Fertility Association invited 12,000 women to participate in an online study on fertility facts. Only one participant out of the 12,000 answered all 15 questions correctly.¹
- Most women who think they can wait until their mid thirties or later and have a baby without the help of medical intervention really can't.
- Fertility declines at a much earlier age than is generally assumed. If you're a healthy woman, most likely your fertility will peak in your mid-twenties and start to decline at about age 27. Millions of us are simply unaware of how fast the fertility clock winds down.²
- It keeps on ticking for men, too. Recent studies indicate that men may start losing their fertility as early as 35.
- Infertility affects an estimated one in six couples. Up to forty percent of cases are due alone or in part to male factor infertility.³
- **By knowing accurate information about your own body, your decisions can be based on knowledge, not on fear, and you won't find yourself making a choice you're not ready to make.**

PREVENTING STD'S

- Just one unprotected sexual encounter could lead to a lifetime of complications and sickness, and it's now conventional wisdom to take precautions. If you are not currently trying to have a baby and are having unprotected sex, stop. Get tested for STD's now, particularly Chlamydia, which can go undetected for years and can cause permanent sterility.
- The top four STD's that affect fertility are Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis, and HPV.
- PID (pelvic inflammatory disease) will cause more than 100,000 women in the U.S. to experience infertility annually.⁵
- You're not a kid anymore. Know your partner and talk to him about these issues, but rely on yourself to stay safe.

1. The American Fertility Association, A Baby, Maybe?, http://www.theafa.org/library/article/a_baby_maybe/

2. http://www.theafa.org/library/article/a_baby_maybe/

3. <http://curezone.com/art/read.asp?ID=140&db=1&CO=1>

4. The American Fertility Association, Preventable Infertility & The STI Link, http://www.theafa.org/library/article/preventable_infertility_the_sti_link/

5. http://www.theafa.org/library/article/preventable_infertility_the_sti_link/

AVOIDING ENVIRONMENTAL TOXINS

- They don't just affect the planet. They may also affect your body, and the body and brain of the baby you may choose to carry some day. There's mounting evidence that numerous environmental factors have an effect on fertility and on the health of developing fetuses.
- Reports from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia show an increase in a specific genital birth defect in boys. Exposure in the womb to a common chemical that disrupts hormones, phthalates, is the suspected culprit. While not yet proven in human studies, the dramatic increase in these cases, as proven in animal data have many doctors concerned."⁶
- Choose plastics with the recycling code 1, 2 or 5. Recycling codes 3 and 7 are more likely to contain bisphenol A or phthalates and should never be used to re-heat food.⁷
- The chemical bisphenol A (BPA), widely used in products such as food cans, milk container linings, water pipes and even dental sealants, has now been found to be an endocrine disruptor. BPA has already been shown to increase breast cancer cell growth, and in the January 2005 edition of the journal Cancer Research, another UC research team reported that it increased the growth of some prostate cancer cells as well.⁸
- Mercury-Fish are an important part of any health regime, however, fish that contain high levels of mercury⁹ should be avoided. Mercury causes cell mutations¹⁰ which can lead to cancer, miscarriage and possibly even autism. Do not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel or tilefish which all contain high levels of mercury. Eat only 12 ounces of fish a week in varieties known to have lower levels of this toxin. Some of these are shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock and catfish. While canned light is OK, you should avoid eating albacore tuna which has higher levels of mercury.
- Benzene—used to make certain rubbers, lubricants, dyes, and detergents and found in some paint, nail polish, and hair dyes is an endocrine disruptor and can cause a woman to stop having periods; men may experience decreased sperm count. Benzene can also cause hyperactivity in some children. A study conducted by The UK's Food Standards Agency found that the effects of sodium benzoate on children's behavior in both tests were not consistent, despite being used in similar doses. The scientists conclude that the tests suggest the product alone was not directly responsible for causing hyperactivity. However, the FSA added that the preservative, when combined with other additives in soft-drink formulation, still potentially contributed to increased hyperactivity in children.¹¹

- **YOU KNOW YOU SHOULDN'T SMOKE;** Virtually all scientific studies support the conclusion that smoking has an adverse impact on fertility and is also linked to a higher rate of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) death among infants. And it doesn't matter which one of you is doing the smoking, you or your partner.¹²

HOW TO AVOID PHTHALATES:

1. Read the ingredients. You can identify phthalates in some products by their chemical names, or abbreviations:
 - **DBP** (di-n-butyl phthalate) and **DEP** (diethyl phthalate) are often found in personal care products, including nail polishes, deodorants, perfumes and cologne, aftershave lotions, shampoos, hair gels and hand lotions. (BzBP, see below, is also in some personal care products.)
 - **DEHP** (di-(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate or Bis (2-ethylhexyl) phthalate) is used in PVC plastics, including some medical devices.
 - **BzBP** (benzylbutyl phthalate) is used in some flooring, car products and personal care products.
 - **DMP** (dimethyl phthalate) is used in insect repellent and some plastics (as well as rocket propellant).
2. Be wary of the term "fragrance," which is used to denote a combination of compounds, possibly including phthalates, which are a subject of recent concern because of studies showing they can mimic certain hormones.¹³

**THERE'S
MOUNTING
EVIDENCE THAT
NUMEROUS
ENVIRONMENTAL
FACTORS HAVE
AN EFFECT ON
FERTILITY AND ON
THE HEALTH OF
DEVELOPING
FETUSES.**

YOU NEED A DOCTOR'S HELP - WHERE WILL YOU BEST BE SERVED?

When deciding on what kind of physician to work with on your family building plan, consider these differences:

- An OB/GYN (Obstetrician Gynecologist) diagnoses and treats the general female population and also cares for women during their pregnancy. You probably are currently under the care of an OB/GYN.
- A Reproductive Endocrinologist is a doctor who specializes in infertility and hormonal disorders.

6. Howard M. Snyder III, MD, Attending Urologist, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Inquirer, *Male, interrupted*, <http://www.philly.com/inquirer/magazine/33347609.html>, (October 27, 2008).

7. The Daily Green, *How to Avoid Phthalates: 3 Steps to Help Avoid a Hormone-Mimicking Chemical*, <http://www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/latest/phthalates-47020418>, (February 4, 2008)

8. Bracey, David, University of Cincinnati, *Chemical used in food containers disrupts brain development*, http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2005-12/uoc-cuil20205.php, (December 2, 2005).

9. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *What You Need to Know About Mercury in Fish and Shellfish*, <http://www.epa.gov/fishadvisories/advice/>, Oct 23, 2009

10. *What Mercury Does to You, Mercury's Effects on the Body*, http://mercurytalk.com/wiki/index.php/What_Mercury_Does_To_You, June 3, 2006

11. Merrett, Neil, *Drink makers play down additive link to hyperactivity*, <http://www.beveragedaily.com/Industry-Markets/Drink-makers-play-down-additive-link-to-hyperactivity>, (September 6, 2007).

12. American Society of Reproductive Medicine, *Patient's Fact Sheet: Smoking and Infertility*, <http://www.asrm.org/Patients/FactSheets/smoking.pdf>.

13. <http://www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/latest/phthalates-47020418>

No matter which type of physician you choose to utilize, please ask them the following questions:

- How do I know if I should be evaluated for infertility?
- How long should I try to get pregnant before seeing a specialist?
- What testing will I or my partner and I have to go through prior to treatment?
- How long will it take to diagnose the problem?
- How long from when I am diagnosed to when I can begin treatment?
- Is there any sort of waiting list for the treatment?
- How long should I expect to undergo treatment?
- What percentage of your patients is in my age group?
- What are your live birth success rates for your patients who are my age with my medical history?
- What surgical procedures might you recommend for my partner and/or me?
- How many IVF attempts will you make?
- What is your IVF success rate per embryo transfer for your patients who are my age with my medical history? How many embryos do you generally transfer for your patients who are my age with my medical history?
- How will you monitor my treatment and how often?
- If necessary, do you have access to donor egg, embryo and sperm programs?
- If my insurance doesn't cover testing and treatment, can we make arrangements for a payment plan or credit card payment?
- I need to talk to someone about my feelings and my partner's feelings about infertility. Is there a support group and/or a counselor you can refer us to?

The bottom line is, take care of yourself. You can make small changes that will make you healthier, not only reproductively, but in every way. There are breakthroughs happening every day in the world of fertility - stay informed on your options and your rights. And whenever you have a question, The AFA is here to help.

ABOUT THE AFA

The American Fertility Association, a 501 (c) (3) national non-profit organization is a lifetime resource for infertility prevention, reproductive health and family building. AFA services and materials are provided free of charge to consumers and available to everyone without reservation. These services include an extensive online library, monthly online chats, telephone and in-person coaching, a resource directory, hosted message boards, daily fertility news and a toll-free support line. www.theafa.org or 888.917.3777.

OUR SPONSORS

Simply stated, the generosity of our sponsors makes our work possible. The AFA is proud to count the individuals and companies listed below among those who financially support this series of educational events.

- Acacio Fertility Center
- Apthorp Pharmacy
- Batzofin Fertility Services
- California Fertility Partners
- Conceptions Reproductive Associates of Colorado
- East Coast Fertility
- Erickson Law
- Fertility Centers of Illinois
- Fertility SOURCE Companies
- Genesis Fertility and Reproductive Medicine
- MDR Pharmaceutical Care
- NYU Fertility Center
- Pulling Down the Moon
- Schering-Plough
- The Donor SOURCE
- University of California San Francisco

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The AFA is proud to thank Amy-Rose King for allowing us to use her photograph for our cover. To view more of Amy-Rose King's photography please visit her website <http://www.amyrosekingphotography.com/>.

In addition, this piece would not have been possible without the medical advice and guidance of Alan S. Penzias, MD. Thank you for your time and dedication.