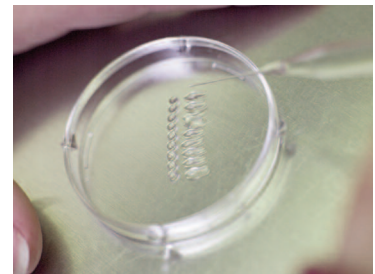




WHAT IS IN VITRO FERTILIZATION?

In vitro fertilization (IVF), is a form of assisted reproductive technology. In IVF, sperm are combined with an egg or eggs in a Petri dish in an attempt to achieve fertilization. The embryos which result from this process are then either transferred into the uterus in the hopes of beginning a pregnancy or, cryopreserved (frozen) for future use.



IVF is considered a viable option for a number of diagnosis, including:

- Endometriosis
- Polycystic ovarian syndrome
- Tubal damage or blocked tubes
- Cervical factor
- Immunological factors
- Male factor infertility
- Unexplained infertility

If you are considering IVF to get pregnant, let the following IVF success tips help you and your partner relax, and maximize your chances of getting pregnant.

IVF Success Tip #1: Do your homework

It takes time and patience to select a successful IVF center. When you screen potential IVF sites, ask questions such as:

- Years in practice
- Live birth rate per IVF cycle
- Rate of multiples (twins or higher)
- Qualifications of embryologist and laboratory staff
- Success rate for your particular diagnosis and age group

IVF Success Tip #2: Take time to relax

It's important to balance the stressful experience of IVF with pleasurable activities that promote relaxation and wellness. Because of the intense stress involved, make sure you keep other life stressors to a minimum.

IVF Success Tip #3: Talk to a counselor

Consider talking to a mental health counselor if you feel anxious, depressed, or if your relationship feels strained. Some findings show that being involved in a stress management program or undergoing counseling may even boost your chances of conceiving.

IVF Success Tip #4: Be patient

Many couples find that the intensity and waiting involved with IVF (screenings, testing, and procedures) is almost more than they can bear. Some couples have already waited months and even years to get pregnant. Then, they are immediately disappointed to find that the IVF process involves a time commitment.

As you focus on staying patient during this time, an important IVF success tip is to chill! Make plans to stay active with friends and family. Discover a hobby or a new activity that is relaxing and fun. Try to keep your mind off of any worries or potential setbacks during the IVF journey. And, most importantly, have hope that your doctors will do all they can to help you get pregnant and have a healthy baby.

IVF Success Tip #5: Start early

One IVF success tip is to begin the IVF cycle as soon as you and your doctor decide that you are a good candidate for in vitro fertilization. Because female fertility declines as women get older, starting IVF early on is important.

Some experts estimate that as many as 1/3 of women will have trouble with fertility after age 35, with over 2/3 of women struggling with infertility by age 40. If you are over 30 and have struggled to conceive after 6 months, talk to your doctor to see what options you have, including IVF.

IVF Success Tip #6: Ask about alternative therapies

Another IVF success tip for women may be borrowed from Traditional Chinese Medicine, which has used acupuncture to treat women's health issues for centuries. Multiple studies have shown that acupuncture may be beneficial to women who are undergoing the IVF process when performed within one day of the embryo transfer. Ask your fertility specialist about alternative theories to see if they may help your situation.

IVF Success Tip #7: Don't bypass the semen analysis for men

A semen analysis is an important IVF success tip for men. Sperm quality can change as time passes, and as little as one year passing by can affect sperm count, shape and movement.

It is important to check your semen before beginning an IVF cycle, to determine whether there is an infection present, among other potential issues.

IVF Success Tip #8: Discuss Your Lifestyle Choices with your Doctor

Weight, exercise and diet may all affect your chances at IVF success, as do behaviors such as smoking, excessive drinking, and drug use. Make sure you are honest with your doctor about your lifestyle choices, so that you can modify them accordingly in order to boost your chances of IVF success

IVF Success Tip #9: Talk openly with your doctor

Effective communication with your physician is a vital IVF success tip, as you seek answers to problems with infertility and worries about IVF. Write down questions you may have about IVF, including your infertility problems and modes of treatment, then talk with your doctor about these concerns. Once you understand more about how IVF may help, you can take immediate measures to formulate a plan for successful conception.

Overall, the following factors can affect IVF success:

1. Your age (women under 35 have the best chances of pregnancy)
2. The health of your uterus
3. The quality of your partner's semen and sperm
4. The health and development of the embryo after fertilization
5. The number of embryos transferred (usually less are transferred if you are a younger woman)
6. The length of the luteal phase after transfer is complete (a luteal phase that is too short is often less desirable)

A Number of Factors Can Impact Upon IVF Success

Unfortunately, not all IVF cycles will result in a pregnancy or live birth. Your age and the age of your male partner can affect IVF success. Along with differences in age, couples will also have different causes of infertility that influence IVF success.

As an example, you may have infertility issues that are caused by tubal problems or ovulation dysfunction. Other your partner may struggle with male factors like low sperm counts. And some couples will have infertility issues that stem from both the male and the female.

Since each couple undergoing IVF to get pregnant has individual and unique differences, it may be difficult for your doctor to predict if you'll have IVF success.

Multiple embryos and IVF

If you are under age 35, the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology (SART) recommends that only one embryo should be implanted during IVF. That's because a younger woman has a greater chance of IVF success than an older woman.

Also, if you are under age 35, transferring two embryos might increase your chances of having pregnancy complications or multiple births. With multiple births, you may be at risk for a premature delivery. Premature births can result in low birth rates and developmental problems.

Older moms may be less likely to become pregnant, so sometimes two or more embryos are implanted in women over 35 to increase IVF success. Still, when multiple embryos implant during IVF, the likelihood of complications is increased in pregnancy.

Choose your physician wisely

Even if maternal age is not a factor and time is on your side, choosing a reputable clinic can save you countless dollars, heartache, and time.

Be an educated patient. Participate fully in your own treatment, ask as many questions as you require, and get support from outside sources if you need to as well. Support groups and message boards for infertility patients abound, as do competent therapists who specialize in this area.

It is important to understand the risks associated with an IVF procedure

Rarely, your ovaries can become hyperstimulated, which can result in severe bloating and pain. It is important to discuss your individual risk of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome with your physician prior to the procedure, as well as the risks associated with the anesthesia which will be utilized during retrieval.

Predicting your IVF success

As you can imagine, undergoing IVF is a very emotional and stressful experience for all involved, especially given all the time, work and money spent to make this pregnancy happen.

That's why it is so important to be open and honest with your fertility specialist. Ask about the different factors that might affect your individual fertility situation. Discuss problems that might negatively impact your IVF success.

It is true that women who are younger than 35 are the most likely to have a higher IVF success rate the first time, getting pregnant after an IVF cycle. So to increase your odds for IVF success, it is probably best to start the ART procedure as soon as your doctor agrees that it is necessary.

Be educated, be proactive, be a participant in your own IVF cycle

The first baby born through In vitro fertilization is now in her thirties. This process has resulted in the birth of over three million babies world wide. Learn as much as you can about IVF, your own infertility issues, and your potential for IVF success. Ask questions, get support, and stay positive. The more you know, the better your chances for conception will be.

Attain Fertility™ Centers, an IntegraMed Specialty and provider of the Attain® IVF Programs, is a proud sponsor of The American Fertility Association's commitment to fertility education and community support. Talk to a fertility expert at an Attain Fertility Center: 800-649-5315.

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