

Health tip: Infertility and pregnancy loss

Planning a family is an exciting, yet complex journey. Concerns about infertility and pregnancy loss are a reality for some. For a healthy pregnancy and delivery, prioritize your health, stay informed, and seek support. Understanding your risk factors and taking proactive steps to maintain a healthy lifestyle may help improve chances of conception and a healthy pregnancy.

Risk factors for women

- Fertility naturally declines with age, particularly after 35
- Lifestyle factors including smoking and alcohol and drug use
- Weight issues, including obesity, underweight, excessive weight loss or gain
- Excessive physical or emotional stress resulting in amenorrhea
- Maternal health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or poorly controlled asthma

Risk factors for men

- Smoking, heavy alcohol use, and drug use may reduce sperm count and quality
- Obesity may affect hormone levels and sperm count
- Exposure to testosterone may affect sperm production
- Frequent exposure of the testes to hot temperatures may cause fertility issues (ex. hot tubs and saunas)
- Certain medications may impact sperm production
- Exposure to radiation or environmental toxins may damage sperm



Reduce tobacco to reduce risk

- Smoking during pregnancy may lead to low birth weight, preterm birth, certain birth defects, and stillbirth.
- Quitting tobacco may support healthy fertility in men and women as well as lead to healthier pregnancies.

Pregnancy loss and grief

Pregnancy loss includes both miscarriage and stillbirth. It is a profound and deeply personal experience. Seeking support, taking care of your physical and emotional health, and giving your self time to heal are crucial steps in managing this difficult journey. Understanding the stages of grief can help you make sense of the emotions you may be feeling.

Five stages of grief:

- **Denial** – Avoidance, confusion, elation, shock, fear
- **Anger** – Frustration, irritation, anxiety
- **Bargaining** – Struggling to find meaning, reaching out to others, telling one’s story
- **Depression** – Overwhelmed, helplessness, hostility, flight
- **Acceptance** – Exploring options, new plan in place, moving on

If you’ve been trying to conceive for over a year (or six months if the woman is over 35) without success, seek medical advice. A fertility specialist can evaluate both partners to identify any underlying issues and recommend treatment options.



Sources:

1. CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductive-health/about/index.html>. 2024. Accessed October 2024.
 2. Harvard Health Publishing. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/5-stages-of-grief-coping-with-the-loss-of-a-loved-one>. 2023. Accessed October 2024.
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