

## TIPS FOR COPING WITH FERTILITY ISSUES

1. Acknowledge that this is a difficult time.
2. Communicate with your partner and decide how you want to share information with friends or family.
3. Make sure you have a support network around you to help and to talk to.
4. Educate yourself. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
5. Be proactive by addressing lifestyle factors including weight loss, stopping smoking and reducing alcohol consumption.
6. Realise it is normal to feel uncomfortable or jealous of those around you who already have children. Realise it can be normal for your sex life to change. This will usually settle when your fertility journey has been resolved.
7. Try not to let fertility problems take over your life. Carry on with the activities you enjoy or embrace new ones.
8. Try to minimise stress in other aspects of life by prioritising your own needs.
9. Consider trying relaxation techniques.
10. Consider using counselling services via your GP or at Bath Fertility Centre.
11. Use the support on offer, including local and national support groups.

## LOCAL and NATIONAL SUPPORT GROUPS

[www.bathfertility.com](http://www.bathfertility.com)

**All patients are welcome to self-refer to the counselling team based at Bath Fertility Centre.**

**Gill Ford can be contacted on 01761 434464 or via the Reception desk.**

**Information, discussion and support for those affected by fertility problems:**

<http://www.infertilitynetworkuk.com>

<http://www.fertilityfriends.co.uk>

**Information about Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome:**

[www.verity-pcos.org.uk/about\\_pcos](http://www.verity-pcos.org.uk/about_pcos)

**Information about Endometriosis:**

<https://www.endometriosis-uk.org/>

**Information and support for those considering using donor sperm and eggs:**

[www.dcnetwork.org](http://www.dcnetwork.org)

**Information and support for childless individuals and couples:**

<http://www.gateway-women.com>

<http://www.childless-not-by-choice.meetup.com>

**Information about adoption**

[www.first4adoption.org.uk](http://www.first4adoption.org.uk)



# Coping with Fertility Issues



## When will we have a baby?

It can be normal for conception to take up to a year, but difficulty conceiving can be common. Approximately 1 in 6 couples may experience challenges.

- *Is it difficult to talk about?*
- *Do you feel you have lost control?*
- *Do you blame yourself?*
- *Has your sex life taken a nosedive?*
- *Do you feel that fertility issues are taking over your life?*

All of these emotions are common for people with fertility problems to feel.

At **Bath Fertility Centre** we acknowledge that this can be a stressful and overwhelming time, we promote a holistic approach to your treatment. This leaflet aims to help you make the process easier on both a lifestyle and an emotional level.

[Written by Dr Kate Kerr and Gill Ford Nov 2015]

## Why is this happening to us?

Understanding the situation can make you feel more empowered and in control.

Your appointments in the Reproductive Medicine clinic and at **Bath Fertility Centre** are tailored to you as an individual to find out what your particular difficulties are.

In women, common causes of infertility include older age, diminished ovarian reserve, lack of ovulation (releasing an egg from the ovary), tubal abnormalities and endometriosis.

In men, the problem can be related to the poor quality of sperm due to a number of different factors.

In approximately one third of couples there will not be an obvious cause for their infertility and this is called unexplained infertility. This simply means that medicine has not come up with all the answers yet.

Your doctor will ask you questions and organise tests to help decide which treatments are appropriate. For some, time is all that is necessary. For many couples, more specific treatments may be needed.

Investigations can include blood tests timed at certain points in your cycle, ultrasound scans and some operative procedures.

Treatments offered can include: ovulation induction, Intrauterine Insemination (IUI), In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF), Intra Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI), Egg Donation, Sperm Donation and Egg Freezing. More detailed information is available on these when appropriate for your care.

## Taking back control

There are some things that you can do for yourself. Firstly, always ensure that other medical problems are under control and any associated specialists are aware that you are trying to conceive.

### Addressing Lifestyle factors

A healthy diet and active lifestyle will allow your body to work at its best.

- **Stop smoking** Some NHS funded treatment is not available if you or your partner smoke.
- **Reduce drug and alcohol consumption**

The Department of Health recommends no more than 1-2 glasses of wine or 1 pint beer per week if you are trying to get pregnant.

- **Aim for a Body Mass Index of less than 30, preferably 20-25.**
- **Women should take Folic Acid 400 mcgs once daily** (to prevent neural tube defects).
- **Men can take male health supplements including Zinc, Vitamin C, Vitamin E and Selenium** (helpful to some men with mild sperm factor problems).

- **Sleep and Relaxation**

Try and structure your day to allow yourself time to unwind and relax in the evenings. You may find simple relaxation techniques such as yoga, mindfulness, meditation or acupuncture helpful.

- **Minimise other stress**

Where possible try to prioritise yourselves. Be proactive in limiting stress at work and other aspects of your life.

- **Access local or national support resources**

You can find more information on Smoke Stop, Weight loss clinics, Dietician, Drug and Alcohol support via your GP or practice nurse.

- **Counselling**

Can provide support during the process and is available via GP or Bath Fertility Centre.

## SEX – a difficult subject

### **How often should we have sex?**

We generally recommend regular unprotected intercourse two to three times per week throughout your cycle. This frequency can be increased during the fertile time.

### **Sexual function difficulties**

It is common for men and women to experience difficulties with the physical act of sexual intercourse. There may be specific treatments or therapies available to help, these can be obtained via the GP. All problems will be treated in a sensitive and professional manner. Fertility friendly lubricants make intercourse more comfortable. These can be accessed via your local pharmacy.

Some people may find certain intimate procedures more difficult. It is important to advise your health professional so that they can be as accommodating as possible.

### **Fertility treatment can take the fun out of sex.**

Couples who have been trying to conceive for a while may find that sex becomes difficult or stressful. This is normal and often improves when the fertility problems have been resolved. Addressing the issue is an individual matter but certain general tips may prove useful:

- Communicate with each other. Set time aside to talk about how you are feeling, share the journey.
- Don't assume you know what your partner is thinking. Tell your partner what feels right for you.
- Prioritise date nights or massage to rekindle intimacy in your relationship.
- Access Psychosexual therapy to restart your sex life – talk to our counsellor or access [www.cosrt.org.uk](http://www.cosrt.org.uk)