

Improving Your Fertility



Your healthcare provider may suggest some simple methods to help you get pregnant. Most focus on predicting ovulation. This is the time when sex has the best chance of success. Your healthcare provider may also advise working on other factors that can affect fertility.

Predicting ovulation

Conception is possible only when a woman is ovulating. One signal of ovulation is a surge in the hormone LH. Other signals include changes in body temperature and changes in cervical mucus.

Ovulation predictor kits

One of the best signals of ovulation is a sudden increase in the hormone LH. A simple urine test called an ovulation predictor kit is available at most drugstores. It can help pinpoint this surge. Have sex the day you notice the surge. Keep having sex daily over the next 3 days, or as often as your healthcare provider suggests.

Body temperature changes

A woman's resting temperature or basal body temperature increases after ovulation. By this point in the cycle, having sex will not increase your chances of getting pregnant. But it means ovulation has occurred.

Cervical mucus changes

Shortly before ovulation, a woman's cervical mucus gets clear and stretchy. The mucus also increases in quantity. This makes it easier for sperm to travel through the cervix. Not all women notice these changes. But if you do, begin having sex daily until the mucus thickens again.

Working on other factors that affect fertility

Certain lifestyle and health habits can affect fertility. Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider about these issues. You may be able to make some simple changes to improve your chances of conception. Keep in mind, though, that it can take time for healthy changes to improve your fertility.

Weight problems

Being overweight or underweight can affect hormone levels. In women, this can affect ovulation. In men, obesity can decrease sperm count.

Medicines, supplements, and herbal remedies

Medicines, supplements, and herbal remedies can affect hormone levels in men and women. They can also affect the quantity and quality of sperm. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about any substances you take.

Sexually transmitted infections

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can scar the reproductive organs in both men and women. If you've had an STI, be sure to tell your healthcare provider.

Testicular heat

A man's testicles are normally a few degrees cooler than the rest of his body. When the testicles are too warm, sperm production may decline. Try to not use hot tubs and saunas.

Smoking, alcohol, and drugs

Smoking can affect estrogen levels and decrease egg production in women. Men who smoke may have lowered sperm count. Drinking too much or using drugs can also decrease fertility in both men and women.

Chemical exposure

Certain chemicals can affect hormone levels. Talk with your healthcare provider if you're regularly exposed to strong chemicals. You should also ask about lubricants used during sex. Some types can be toxic to sperm.

Other factors

Getting too much exercise can decrease hormone production. It can also cause irregular menstruation in women. Ongoing stress may also affect fertility and cause ovulation problems.

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