

Reproductive Facts

Patient fact sheet developed by the
American Society for Reproductive Medicine



Infertility Counseling and Support: When and Where to Find It

Infertility is a medical condition that touches all aspects of your life. It may affect your relationships with others, your perspective on life, and how you feel about yourself. How you deal with these feelings will depend on your personality and life experiences. Most people can benefit from the support of family, friends, medical caregivers, and mental health professionals. When considering infertility treatment options such as sperm, egg, or embryo donation or gestational carriers, it may be especially helpful to gain the assistance of a fertility counselor. The following information may help you decide if you need to seek professional help in managing the emotional stresses associated with fertility treatment or need assistance regarding your treatment options.

When do I need to see an infertility counselor?

Consider counseling if you are feeling depressed, anxious, or so preoccupied with your infertility that you feel it is hard to live your life productively. You also may want to seek the assistance of a counselor if you are feeling "stuck" and need to explore your options. Signs that you might benefit from counseling include:

- persistent feelings of sadness, guilt, or worthlessness
- social isolation
- loss of interest in usual activities and relationships
- depression
- agitation and/or anxiety
- mood swings
- constant preoccupation with infertility
- marital problems
- difficulty with "scheduled" intercourse
- difficulty concentrating and/or remembering
- increased use of alcohol or drugs
- changes in appetite, weight, or sleep patterns
- thoughts about suicide or death

Where can I get support?

Support can come from many different sources. Books can offer information and understanding about the emotional aspects of infertility. Support groups and informational meetings can reduce the feeling of isolation and provide opportunities to learn and share with others experiencing infertility. Individual and couple counseling offer the chance to talk with an experienced professional to sort out your feelings, identify coping mechanisms, and work to find solutions to your difficulties.

Discussions with supportive family members and friends also can be useful.

How do I find an infertility counselor or other support?

Start by asking your physician for referrals to trained mental health professionals in your area, a list of relevant books and articles, and support resources that deal with fertility-related matters. Counselors may be psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, psychiatric nurses, or marriage and family therapists. Visit ReproductiveFacts.org and click on the button labeled "Find a Healthcare Professional" for a list of doctors and mental health professionals in your area.

Are there any specific resources available to guide individuals coping with infertility?

There are many resources included on the ASRM patient Website (ReproductiveFacts.org), including frequently

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asked questions, videos, fact sheets, and booklets (many also in Spanish), and ASRM Practice and Ethics statements.

Below are listed several additional resources that may be helpful in addressing a variety of concerns and issues. This list is by no means exhaustive. If you require help regarding other topics, please consult the patient resources section of ReproductiveFacts.org or your healthcare professional.

- **American Fertility Association (AFA):** An organization created to educate the public about reproductive disease and support families during struggles with infertility and adoption, TheAFA.org
- **Choice Moms:** An organization to help single women who proactively decide to become the best mother they can, through adoption or conception, choice-moms.org
- **Fertile Hope:** A national LIVESTRONG initiative dedicated to providing reproductive information, support, and hope to cancer patients and survivors whose medical treatments present the risk of infertility, fertilehope.org
- **Frank Talk:** A peer-support Website dedicated to helping men deal with erectile dysfunction, FrankTalk.org
- InterNational Council on Infertility Information Dissemination, Inc. (INCIID), inciid.org
- **North American Council on Adoptable Children:** An organization committed to meeting the needs of waiting children and the families who adopt them, nacac.org
- **Parents Via Egg Donation:** An organization created to

provide information to parents and parents-to-be and to share information about all facets of the egg donation process, parentsviaeggdonation.org

- **Pop Luck Club:** The Pop Luck Club has evolved into a substantial voice, helping to support the growth of our wonderfully diverse LBGT community, popluckclub.org
- **RESOLVE:** A national infertility support organization, Resolve.org
- **Single Mothers by Choice:** Offering support and information to single women who are considering motherhood and to single mothers who have chosen this path to parenthood, singlemothersbychoice.org
- **Magazines:** Fertility Road, Fertility Magazine, Conceive