

Infertility is a condition of the male or female reproductive system defined by the failure to achieve a pregnancy after 12 months or more of regular unprotected sexual intercourse.

Frequent intercourse without birth control usually results in pregnancy:

- For 50% of couples within 3 months
- For 75% within 6 months
- For 90% within 1 year

Key facts:

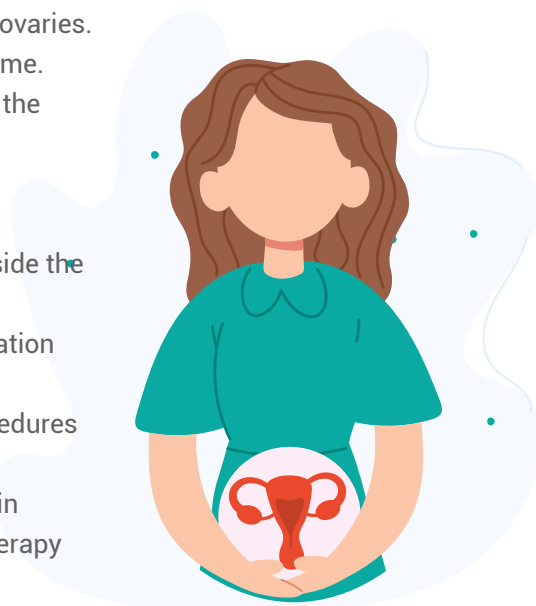
- Women are more likely to die following a heart attack than men
- Women are more likely to show signs of depression and anxiety than men
- The effects of sexually transmitted diseases can be more serious in women
- Osteoarthritis affects more women than men
- Women are more likely to have urinary tract problems

Causes of Infertility

Several factors can contribute to infertility in either a male or female reproductive system. Some causes of infertility, however, cannot be explained.

In the female reproductive system, infertility may be caused by:

- **Ovulation disorders.** These affect the release of the eggs from the ovaries. These include hormonal disorders such as polycystic ovary syndrome.
- **Uterine or cervical abnormalities,** such as polyps, abnormalities in the cervix, or abnormalities in uterus shape.
- **Fallopian tube damage or blockage,** which is usually caused by inflammation (salpingitis).
- **Endometriosis,** a condition in which endometrial tissue grows outside the uterus, can affect the ovaries, uterus, and fallopian tubes.
- **Primary ovarian insufficiency** (early menopause) is when menstruation ends before age 40.
- **Pelvic adhesions,** scar tissue that binds organs after surgical procedures or pelvic infections, appendicitis, endometriosis, etc.
- **Cancer and its treatment.** Female fertility can be impaired by certain cancers, particularly reproductive cancers. Radiation and chemotherapy can both affect fertility.
- **Being underweight.** Women at risk of fertility problems include those with eating disorders, such as anorexia or bulimia, and those who follow a very low-calorie or restrictive diet.



In the male reproductive system, infertility may be caused by:

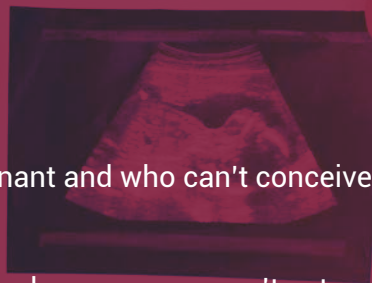
- **Abnormal sperm production** or function resulting from undescended testicles, genetic defects, or infections like chlamydia, mumps, or HIV. Sperm quality can also be affected by enlarged veins in the testes (varicocele).
- **Overexposure to certain environmental factors,** such as pesticides and other chemicals, and radiation. Cigarette smoking, alcohol, and taking medications to treat bacterial infections, high blood pressure and depression also can affect fertility. Frequent exposure to heat, such as in saunas or hot tubs, can raise body temperature and may affect sperm production.
- **Damage related to cancer treatment,** including radiation or chemotherapy. Cancer treatment can impair sperm production, sometimes severely.
- **Genetic disorders.** Genetic conditions such as a Klinefelter's syndrome, Y-chromosome microdeletion, myotonic dystrophy, and other, less common genetic disorders, may cause no sperm or low numbers of sperm to be produced.
- **Being overweight.** An inactive lifestyle and being overweight may increase the risk of infertility in women and men. Sperm count may be affected by being overweight.



Infertility Types

Types of infertility include:

- 1 **Primary:** A woman who was never pregnant and who can't conceive after one year of not using birth control.
- 2 **Secondary:** Secondary infertility occurs when a woman can't get pregnant again after having at least one successful pregnancy.



Infertility Treatment

Assisted reproductive technology, intrauterine insemination, or medicine can all help to treat infertility. The goals of treatment are to:

- Treat the cause of infertility if possible
- Make conception more likely
- Reduce the time needed to conceive

Medication and intrauterine insemination frequently go together. A doctor's recommendations for treating infertility depend on the following factors:

- Infertility factors
- Duration of infertility
- Female's age
- Treatment preferences after discussing success rates, risks, and benefits of each type of treatment



Assisted Reproductive Techniques

Infertility problems can be treated with assisted reproductive technology (ART). Treatments for both eggs and sperm fall under this category. The procedure involves removing eggs from the ovaries. Embryos are created by mixing eggs with sperm. Embryos are then placed back in the mother's body. These treatments include:



- **An intrauterine insemination technique** that selects only the most active sperm, which are then placed directly in the uterus
- **In vitro fertilisation (IVF)** is the most common and successful form of ART which involves stimulating the ovaries, retrieving the mature eggs, fertilising them with sperm in culture dishes, growing the embryos in the culture, and implanting one or more embryos in the woman's uterus.
- **ICSI (intracytoplasmic sperm injection):** This procedure is like IVF. The embryologist injects a single sperm into each harvested egg, and then a provider transfers the embryo into the uterus.

Here are some tips for couples considering getting pregnant soon or in the future:

- **Keep a healthy weight:** Overweight and underweight women are at increased risk of ovulation disorders.
- **Stop smoking.** Tobacco has several negative effects not only on fertility but also on overall health and foetal health.
- **Avoid alcohol.** Heavy alcohol consumption can lead to decreased fertility. Also, alcohol consumption can adversely affect the health of a developing fetus.
- **Manage your stress.** Studies show that stress can worsen fertility outcomes, reducing stress before conceiving can help to a successful pregnancy.



We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that Daman's Disease Management Department offers a range of educational tele-coaching programmes including Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). This free of charge programme supports insured Thiqa members and aims to raise awareness and educate women to increase their likelihood of completing their family.

If you would like to know more about our services, you can reach out to us by sending us an email or calling us on:

✉ disease.management@damanhealth.ae

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