



وزارة الصحة العامة
Ministry of Public Health
دولة قطر • State of Qatar



المبادئ الإرشادية السريرية لدولة قطر
NATIONAL CLINICAL GUIDELINES FOR QATAR

Information for Patients & Caregivers

Infertility: What you need to know?

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+ WHAT IS INFERTILITY?

Infertility is the inability of a sexually active couple to achieve a successful pregnancy despite at least one year of regular unprotected intercourse.

Infertility may be due to problems with either one or both partners. If the cause is found in the male partner, this is called *Male Infertility*. If the cause is found to be in the female partner, this is called *Female Infertility*.

There are two main types of infertility:

- **Primary Infertility** means you or your partner have never had a child.
- **Secondary Infertility** means you or your partner have had a child previously, but you are now having problems conceiving.

+ WHEN SHOULD I SEE A DOCTOR?

You should see a doctor if you and your spouse have been unable to conceive despite having regular intercourse for one year.

But you do not need to have a full year of sexual intercourse, before seeing your doctor, if:

- Either of you is known to have a problem that can interfere with fertility.
- The female partner in the couple, is not having periods.

Most couples having regular unprotected sex, will conceive within 1 year and about 50% of couples will become pregnant in the following year.

+ MALE INFERTILITY

It is important to check for an underlying correctable cause for infertility, in both partners.

The symptoms that might indicate a problem in the male partner, includes:

- Pain, swelling, and prominent veins in the testicles.
- Abnormal discharge from the penis.
- Lower sex drive than usual.
- Difficulty getting or maintaining an erection.
- Premature ejaculation or difficulty ejaculating during sex.
- Painful ejaculation.

In many cases, the problem may simply be due to poor sperm production - in which case the male partner will have no symptoms.

+ FEMALE INFERTILITY

Some women with an underlying cause for the infertility may have:

- Absent or irregular periods.
- Abnormal vaginal discharge.
- Very heavy or painful periods.
- Painful intercourse.
- Previous gynaecological problems or surgery.
- Recurrent miscarriage after initially falling pregnant.

As with men, sometimes the underlying cause may have no symptoms.

Whether or not you or your partner have symptoms, see your doctor for further discussion and investigation.

Talking about sex and intimate personal problems can feel awkward and embarrassing.

Be assured that your doctors will keep all information you share confidential and they often see patients with similar problems.

Don't let embarrassment stop you from seeking medical help.



+ WHAT YOUR DOCTOR WILL DO?

You and your spouse should see the doctor together in your first appointment.

Your doctor will ask questions about the following areas:

- Any symptoms you or your partner are having.
- If either of you have had any other sexual partners.
- If you or your partner have had any pregnancies or children either in this relationship or previous relationships.
- Any past illnesses and infections.
- Any medication that you may be taking.
- Your occupation and lifestyle habits.

Your doctor will examine you and your spouse and measure your heights and weights. You will usually have some tests including:

- **A sperm test.**
- **Blood hormone tests.**
- **Urine tests.**
- **Ultrasound** of the scrotum in men.
- **Ultrasound** of the pelvis in women.

Depending on the results of your tests, your doctor may start treatment or refer you to a specialist for further investigation with more specialised tests to look for a correctable underlying cause.

If an underlying cause is found the doctors will plan to treat this according to the nature of the cause. If no cause is found, then the doctors may recommend *Assisted Conception* to help you get pregnant.

In any case, it is good idea to ensure your lifestyle is optimal to maximise your chances of getting pregnant.

+ HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR CHANCES OF GETTING PREGNANT?

A poor lifestyle can have a negative effect on the reproductive system in both men and women.

Improving your lifestyle as outlined below, is a simple way to improve your chances of getting pregnant:

- **Have Sex Regularly:** Having sex every 2-3 days will maximise your chances of getting pregnant.
- Using ovulation testing kits may help some couples to have sex around the time of ovulation.
- **Stop smoking** as a whole.
- **Achieve a Healthy Weight:** If you are overweight or obese this will reduce your chances of getting pregnant.
- **Eat Healthier:** Switch to a balanced diet with a variety of whole grains breads, meat, dairy products, fruit, vegetables, and legumes. Avoid saturated fats, foods high in salt or sugar.
- **Exercise Regularly:** Exercise for at least two and a half hours each week at a moderate intensity.
- **Control Medical Conditions:** If you have an underlying medical condition like diabetes, controlling this will improve your fertility.
- **Reduce Scrotal Temperature:** Men should avoid certain activities such as wearing tight underwear, sitting for long periods, hot baths, and saunas that increase your scrotal temperature and reduce sperm production.

+ ASSISTED CONCEPTION

If an underlying cause for infertility is found in either you or your partner, the doctor will try and treat this.

If no cause is found, or the cause cannot be treated, the doctors can provide *Assisted Conception* to help women get pregnant.

Assisted conception techniques are special procedures performed by a specialist to achieve a successful pregnancy. These procedures include:

- **Intrauterine Insemination (IUI):** In this technique, the doctor inserts the sperm directly into a woman's womb. The method is often used when there is a low sperm count in the male partner.
- **In vitro fertilisation (IVF):** The doctors will take eggs from the ovaries of the female partner and in the laboratory will mix them with sperm from the male partner. Once the eggs are fertilised the embryo will be transferred back to the female partner's womb. This method can be used for a number of problems preventing pregnancy.
- **Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI):** A single sperm will be injected directly into an egg in the laboratory and the embryo is then transferred back to female partner's womb. This method is usually used when sperm or egg problems are preventing fertilisation from occurring.

Assisted Conception can be a long, emotionally demanding, and stressful process, which may put stress on your marriage.

Be sure to tell your doctor if you or your partner is feeling anxious, stressed, or depressed.

+ FOLLOW UP

If you are undergoing fertility treatment, ensure you keep to all clinic appointments scheduled by your doctor.

Regular clinic attendance will allow your doctor to properly monitor your treatment and make prompt adjustment to your medications if necessary.

It also provides an opportunity to discuss any concerns you may have.

+ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on *Infertility* can be found in the National Clinical Guideline published by The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) Qatar.

The guideline is available to the public from the MoPH website:

www.moph.gov.qa

