



# Infertility Problems

## NOW NO MORE SOCIAL STIGMA

The desire to have an offspring in every couple has its moorings rooted in from our ancient past. According to the Vedas, it is necessary for every couple to have a child to perpetuate his/her lineage, perform some Samskara, transfer some cultural traditions to next generations for the well-being of family and thereby society. It is a common belief that only if a child performs Samskara after death of an individual which liberates him/her from all bondages and leads him/her to the Heaven.

When friends, siblings, and co-workers effortlessly become pregnant and deliver babies who become the centre of their lives and conversations, an infertile woman and her partner often feel defeated and disgusted and sometimes find future in the dark gutter. In true sense, infertility and isolation are soul sisters. The agony of childlessness encompasses all these issues when a couple does not have a child due to reproductive failure or its functional pause in the body system. The social stigma attached to it is the extreme disapproval of, or discontent with, a person on the grounds of characteristics that distinguish them from other fecund couples in a society. It is surprisingly considered as a normal perception and behaviour pattern of the society by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity of the victim leaving him/her to lead a segregated life with low social esteem.

As a woman catches age, a number of changes take place in her reproductive system. In women, the cessation of menses i.e., menopause is an obvious sign of ageing and a transition period lasts for many years before menopause and this occurs because of distinct and dramatic decline in estrogen production. As women age, the genetic quality and quantity of their eggs and the efficiency with which their bodies reject genetically damaged embryos both decline, leading to an increased risk of genetic problems in the baby. This triad of declining fertility, declining hormone levels and increasing risk for genetic problems are what we all call "biological

clock". In 80% of the cases the cause of infertility can be directly traced to husband or wife or both the partners and in rest 20% no specific reason found after investigation and evaluation of couple. Loss of fecundity may be a cause for further investigations under specialised professional guidance. These unexplained infertile patients need to be identified specifically which are more common in females above 35 years of age.

In men, in the last 30 years, there is 50% increase in number of persons who became fathers above the age of 35. The genetic quality of sperm does decline; motility also declines, leading to an increased risk of genetic problems in offspring above and beyond any contribution by the female. Male fertility and male sex hormone do decline with age. The decline in sex hormones is not as steep or as sudden as with menopause. 1% decline per year in testosterone level after age of 30 years is termed as "Andropause". The symptoms include decreased libido, erectile dysfunction, loss of muscle mass, weight gain, declining cognitive function and Type II diabetes. Older men are at a higher risk of harbouring a child with Schizophrenia and

also risk of having children with Down syndrome. However our society tends to blame the woman as the responsible factor for childlessness. Recent researches suggest that the probability of infertility and its related factors can lie equally with the male partner.

In India, infertility affects 20 per cent couples. Among infertile couples, the problem lying with male partner is 30-40 per cent, 30-40 per cent of female partner can have some problem, and in 20-30 per cent cases both can suffer from some problem. 15 % couples can have more than one cause of infertility, so series of tests and investigations are required and it may take a few months to find out the exact cause of infertility. And above all this, few couples suffer from unexplained infertility where no cause can be traced even after all investigations which bamboozles even biological sciences.

With the development of researches in Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART), a new hope has arisen for many couples and barren women/men who had earlier no choice or limited options for treatments like IUI, IVF, ICSI, Egg & Sperm donations, Surrogacy services and Pre-implantation Genetic diagnosis. The fear of social dismemberment has been the words of past now.

Nevertheless, the financial aspect, mental and moral support with the patient, trained medical consultants, medical risks and many other legal and ethical complications with different techniques are some of the issues that need to be discussed and redressed beforehand properly.

In reality, childbirth is pleasurable and memorable event and it can be compared to any of the physiological processes like sleeping, eating, singing, etc., ultimately giving support to psychological processes. Couples feel intense joy and pleasure as the baby enters this world and particularly your family! Couples feel confident and relaxed, experience an inner strength that emanates from inner beauty - the happiness radiating from that incredible achievement. It is a precious gift that you will cherish for entire life; feel socially alleviated and socially gelled up.



### Causes of Infertility

- 20 per cent cases – unexplained. No specific reason found after investigation and evaluation of couple.

- 80 per cent cases – problems can be directly traced to husband or wife or both the partners.

- Male factor – problem with the quality and quantity of sperms.

- Female factor – problem with ovulation, tubes or uterus.

When to Contact Infertility Specialist?

- If female is <35 years and unable to conceive after 1 year of unprotected intercourse.

- If female is >35 years and unable to conceive after 6 months of unprotected intercourse.

- If the couple had  $\geq 2$  miscarriages.