

Male and female infertility can cause horrible stress on an otherwise strong relationship. With approximately 15% of couples infertile it is fairly common. Usually couples wait to see a doctor until after a year of trying to have a child with no success. However, many doctors would be more than happy to see you and your partner sooner.

## Causes of Male Infertility



### Expectations and Realities

For many expecting first time parents, the impending birth of their baby makes them acutely aware that they will never be simply a couple again, but that they are about to become a family. Other parents-to-be try to convince themselves that life will be unchanged after their child is born. This is not realistic. The [birth](#) of a child will bring with it multiple changes, both in the couple's relationship and in the reality of their activities and what they can plan, at least on a temporary basis. It is critical that a couple discuss these issues before their child is born. A couple who have convinced themselves that nothing will change will be in for a massive disappointment and many frustrations. The idea that they are in control of such a profound experience will be a disappointing fantasy once the baby is brought home from the hospital. On the other hand, the couple who have realistic expectations about the pregnancy and life with their newborn will enjoy the changes in their relationship as they become a family.

### Infertility

About one in every five couples who want to conceive a child is unable to do so. During the last ten years or so, medical science has made tremendous progress in diagnosing and treating causes of infertility and thus has given new hope to childless couples. Improved testing procedures, new drugs that simulate ovulation and surgical techniques that can correct males and female structural problems and sometimes successfully

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## BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

After long periods of infertility, a new baby becomes an even more precious gift that should be celebrated. When visiting your health care practitioner after experiencing infertility, he or she may ask you about the following:

- \*Drug/cigarette usage
- \*General health problems
- \*Outside stressors

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reverse sterilization procedures have enabled many couples to become [parents](#).

Infertility is defined as a couple's inability to conceive a child after one year of regular sexual intercourse without birth control. In about forty percent of all cases of infertility, lies with the man, in about sixty percent, it lies with the woman or both partners.

Infertility is not sterility. The term infertility implies that the condition can be treated and reverse; sterility is applied to a permanent, irreversible inability to have children.

### Causes of Male Infertility

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One of the major causes of male infertility is low sperm count. The sperm count is determined by measuring the number of active sperm present in a millimeter [less than one half teaspoon] of semen [the fluid ejected from the penis during intercourse]. An average sperm count is ninety million sperm per millimeter; a count of forty to sixty million is thought to be necessary for conception. If a man's sperm count is less than twenty million it is highly unlikely that he will be able to father a child [although since only one sperm is needed to fertilize an egg, it is still possible].

A low sperm count can be caused by low levels of testosterone, the male sex hormone, by exposure to chemicals, pesticides or radiation, by very frequent sexual intercourse which depletes the sperm too quickly, and by heat [which slows sperm production] generated by wearing tight underwear or pants, sitting for long periods in cars or trucks, or working near ovens or kilns. Also, a man's fertility declines after the age of forty, although [men](#) can remain fertile into old age.

Infertility can also result if sperm cannot propel themselves through the female reproductive tract to reach the egg, or if sperm are irregularly shape [only sperm with oval heads can fertilize an egg].

In addition to problems with the sperm themselves, male infertility can be caused by any obstruction in the tubes that convey the sperm from the testes to the penis. Infertility may also be caused by varicose veins in the scrotum [the pouch containing the testes], perhaps because the increased blood flow in these swollen veins brings extra heat to the area, or by local infection or injury. Such infertility problems may often be reversed when the underlying condition is corrected.

Surgical removal of part of the prostate gland, as well as the use of certain drugs for high blood pressure can lead to retrograde ejaculation [a disorder in which the semen is passed backward into the bladder to exit with the urine, rather than out through the penis during ejaculation].