

Top Tips for Managing Infertility

Don't Blame Yourself

Most women blame themselves when they're having trouble falling pregnant – "I shouldn't have waited so long", "I should have eaten better when I was pregnant, then I wouldn't have lost the baby". Self-criticisms like these are rarely accurate. It's hard, but try to remember that your fertility difficulties are not your fault.

Your Partner Will React Differently To You

If your partner isn't reacting the way you think they should, try not to judge their reaction - everyone reacts differently to infertility. Women are more likely to want to talk about their feelings, whereas men usually prefer to avoid talking. Neither style of coping is wrong, they're just different.

Have Non-Pregnancy Interests

Trying to fall pregnant can feel like a full-time job, but focusing all of your attention and effort on pregnancy can increase your risk for anxiety and depression. Try to have areas of your life that aren't baby-related, like "baby-talk free" time with friends. Fertility treatments can make this difficult, but try to limit your pregnancy talk.

Give Yourself Permission to Say No

Avoiding all activities will have a negative effect on your mood, so try to do things you usually enjoy even if you don't feel like it. If most of your friends have children, avoiding all baby activities can also make you feel socially isolated. If you're having a particularly bad day, it's ok to give yourself a break and say no to baby-focused celebrations, but try not to avoid all celebrations. Try going for part of the celebration and have something nice planned for yourself afterwards, like a bubble bath or a facial.

Educate Yourself, But Not Too Much

It's definitely helpful to learn about infertility and treatments so you can ask the right questions when you have appointments, but endless reading and research can be unhelpful. It can help you feel in control in the short-term, but keeps you pre-occupied with pregnancy overall.

Take Care of Yourself When Your Period's Due

When you're trying to conceive the arrival of your period is crushing. It's also when you're most vulnerable to thoughts like "I'm never going to fall pregnant". If you've had previous miscarriages your period can also be a reminder of previous losses. You will feel upset when your period arrives, but try not to get caught up in the thoughts that come with this. It's easier said than done, but buying into these thoughts will affect your mood and your anxiety.

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INFERTILITY

Over three million Australians (1 in 6 couples) are affected by infertility – the inability to conceive after 12 months of trying to fall pregnant or the inability to carry a pregnancy to term.

Most couples aim to fall pregnant within a relatively short period of time. When conception takes more time than initially expected it can cause considerable distress.

Anxiety and depression are common side-effects of infertility and symptoms include:

- Ongoing sadness or low mood
- Finding it hard to think about anything else but pregnancy
- Reassurance seeking from doctors to cope with pregnancy-related anxiety
- Frequent monitoring of your pregnancy symptoms
- Irritability
- Feeling guilty, or like you're to blame for not being able to conceive
- Feelings of hopeless
- Not enjoying activities
- Wanting to spend more time alone
- Changes to sleep and appetite
- Trouble concentrating

This tips sheet covers key strategies for coping with infertility.

If you're finding it hard to cope it might also be worthwhile to seek guidance from a clinical psychologist.