



Information Statement – How to Get the Best Out of Your Treatment Cycle

Decision Making

Eighty five percent (85%) of people have pregnancies and children when they are ready, or before they are ready. Life becomes more complicated if there are problems in getting pregnant.

Decisions revolve around:

1. If and when to have tests.
2. What and when to try.
3. How clear is the diagnosis.

Decision making, when one has limited control is a challenge.

Consider these options

1. Begin action with a loose, agreed upon plan eg explore options for six months.
2. Try treatment eg once a year, three times a year, then discuss and reassess.
3. Ask yourselves – what if it takes 2 years to conceive, how would we plan treatments?

Rarely can treatment be sped up, but there is some choice in spacing treatments over time.

Self education

Seeking information about fertility, infertility and fertility treatment programs may help you feel more in control of what is happening to you and your partner. There are a number of sources of such information.

1. ACCESS National Infertility Network. 1800 888 896 www.access.org.au
2. Public and specialist libraries – SHINE SA Library, 64C Woodville Road Woodville, 1300 883 793.
3. COPE Library, 49 a Orsmond Street, Hindmarsh, Ph 8245 8100.
4. Medical Practitioners, and staff working in Reproductive Medicine Units.

Be an Informed Consumer

Relationships

Your relationship may change as a consequence of being on a fertility treatment program.

1. You may feel closer and more 'in tune' with your partner

2. You may feel distanced and emotionally isolated. Couples sometimes become distanced because infertility affects them differently or because they develop different ways of coping.
3. Your sexual relationship may be adversely affected due to the loss of sexual spontaneity.

Remember

1. It is important to nurture your relationship.
2. Communicate openly and honestly with your partner about your feelings and take time to listen to how each other is feeling.
3. Accept differences in each other's feelings and ways of coping.
4. You can't take responsibility for your partner's feelings but you can help support them through those feelings.

Non Pregnancy Treatment Cycle

Out in the community it is generally perceived that "IVF" is the "quick fix", that is, it will work for everyone with fertility problems and work quickly.

However, couples in Reproductive Medicine Programs, know that only a few will become pregnant on their first cycle of treatment. Therefore, spend some time planning for going through a cycle which doesn't result in pregnancy. Experience shows that many individuals will have a strong emotional reaction, like grief, at this time, however, there is a big range of reactions and you are entitled to feel the way you do.

1. Talk to each other about how you feel.
2. Recognize your differences and your similarities.
3. Consider how you could be most comfortable at this time, eg would you want to be alone, with each other, with lots of people etc?
4. Who and what would you choose to avoid.

Support

The stresses of treatment add to the stresses of having a fertility problem (as well, of course, as providing hope.

Consider how you could best:

1. Support yourself
2. Support your partner (ask them how)
3. Support your relationship

Consider supports apart from each other:

1. Who cares about me/us?
2. Who responds when you say "I need your help now please?"
3. Who has the knack of saying just the right, (or just the wrong) thing?
4. Support links through ACCESS
5. Consider places and people where you are most comfortable.
6. Make a places list, eg most comfortable to least comfortable.
7. Make a people list of "most" comfortable to least comfortable to be with.
8. Consider accessing counselling service.

Be Kind to Yourself at This Time

Coping Strategies

Many couples entering treatment are still trying to come to terms with the grief and distress of their infertility. This process combined with the demands of the treatment program itself may leave couples feeling that they are on an emotional slippery dip. There are many things you can do however, to enhance your sense of well being whilst on a treatment program.

1. Practise stress management techniques.
 - Talk problems through with someone.
 - Keep a journal or diary of how you feel –try prose or poetry.
 - Concentrate on the program and avoid over-burdening yourself with extra commitments.
 - Make time for recreation and exercise.
 - Get plenty of sleep.
 - Practise healthy eating habits.
 - Practise relaxation methods (eg progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, meditation etc).
 - Make time to see the Unit Counsellor if you would like support with any of these ideas.

2. Develop and use your support network.
3. Try to be realistic in your expectations of the program. Consider options and alternatives.
4. Acknowledge the stress of being on a treatment program. It is common to experience many different feelings during a cycle – apprehension, anxiety, fear, guilt, anger, sorrow, despair, hope..... Dealing with these feelings can be a challenge. Some of the ideas above may help, but seek to share the feelings with someone. Different emotions respond to different coping techniques. Anger is a very physical emotion and often best expressed in a physical way.

Anxiety and depression however, tend to be more internalised perhaps leading the sufferer to turn inwards and withdraw. Gentle encouragement and support are valuable at this time.

Remember coping is not an "all or nothing" process, but rather a continuing process of self knowledge where you learn from experience what strategies helped you and your partner and in turn will incorporate these into future treatments.

Contact us

If you would like to find out more, contact us on **131 IVF** (131 483) or by email enquire@flindersfertility.com.au