

## *Talking to your doctor about infertility*

If you've been having unprotected sex for a year or more and haven't got pregnant, you might decide to see your doctor for advice and support.

You and your partner will need to undergo tests to try to find out why you are not conceiving and whether there is anything you can do to improve your chances.

You are eligible for tests whether you are trying for your first baby or have had children previously.

This guide is to help you prepare for your visit to the doctor.

### **Before you go**

- **Start keeping a diary of when you have a period.** Your doctor will use this to determine how likely it is that you are ovulating regularly.
- **Think back to when you first started having unprotected sex.** Your doctor will need to know how long you've been having unprotected sex before referring you for further tests.
- **Take folic acid** if you're not already. All women trying to get pregnant are advised to take folic acid supplements.
- **Make a note of your medical history,** particularly any gynaecological issues or surgeries you've had in the past.

## During your appointment

---

- **Your doctor will ask you about your habits and behaviours** like whether you smoke or drink. That's because these, along with other lifestyle factors, have been shown to affect fertility.
- **You might have a blood test to check your hormone levels** or be asked to return for a blood test at another time when you are at a different phase of your cycle.
- **Your doctor will explain** about tests and investigations, and possible treatment options, such as in vitro fertilisation – commonly known as IVF.
- **Don't be embarrassed.** Your doctor needs to know personal information like how often you have sex as this is important in deciding on the next steps.
- **You'll have a physical examination.** You and your partner might both have a physical examination to look for any obvious causes of infertility. The doctor will check your abdomen and might carry out an internal assessment. Your partner will have his scrotum, testicles and penis checked for any signs of abnormality. You might both also be weighed.

## What happens next?

---

- **Follow your doctor's advice.** Make any lifestyle changes they suggest, to help improve your chances of conceiving.
- **Your partner will probably need to provide a sperm sample for testing.**
- **Continue to monitor your monthly cycle.** Keep track of your periods, and when you think you are ovulating.
- **You might need to attend a fertility clinic** for further testing and treatment.
- **You can continue to have regular, unprotected sex** to try to fall pregnant naturally – unless otherwise advised by a healthcare professional.
- **Think about seeking counselling.** Fertility issues can be distressing so you may benefit from discussing your feelings with a trained professional.

## Conversation starters

---

“

My partner and I have been trying for a baby, and we haven't got pregnant. What should we do?

“

I would love a third child, but I'm not conceiving as quickly as I did with my first two babies. Could something be wrong?

“

My periods are irregular. Could that be why I'm not getting pregnant?

“

Our first baby was an IVF baby due to unexplained infertility. We are ready to try for a second baby. Will we need IVF again?

“

What are the treatment options for people who need help conceiving?”