

Coping With Stress

Your Healthy News – Fertility Newsletter

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Dr. James C Dobson once said, “There are very few certainties that touch us all in this mortal experience, but one of the absolutes is that we will experience hardship and stress at some point.” Everyone experiences stress at some time in their life whether it’s at work or at home. When faced with stress, the body reacts with a “Fight-or-Flight” response and increases the amount of adrenalin released which leads to an increase in heart rate, slowing of digestion, and an increase in blood flow to major organs. When the stressor is eliminated, the body is able to relax and the organ systems return to normal. However, in times of chronic stress the body doesn’t return to a relaxed state which can lead to chronic headaches, colds, depression, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, sexual dysfunction, high blood pressure, and ulcers.

Undergoing infertility treatment adds stress to a couple’s daily lives. What was once something that was within reach, pregnancy may begin to feel intangible. Recent evidence has shown that emotional stress releases hormones that can cause preterm labor and possibly miscarriages; to offset those potential side effects, it is important to find ways to deal with stress. Below are some ideas to help cope with stress during infertility treatments and pregnancy.

- 1.) Eat healthy** –It is important to make sure to eat foods from each of the 5 food groups daily, decrease your intake of junk food, and supplement your diet with prenatal vitamins to get the recommended amount of iron and folic acid.
- 2.) Sleep** – It is important to set aside at least 8 hours each night for sleeping. Sleeping allows your body to return to a relaxed state and will increase your energy level and elevate your mood. If you find yourself having difficulty, try purchasing a body pillow, sound machine, or not eating at least an hour before bedtime to prevent heartburn.
- 3.) Exercise** – Exercising regularly releases endorphins, elevates mood, decreases anxiety, and can improve posture which will decrease backaches and fatigue during pregnancy. Evidence suggests that physical activity may also prevent gestational diabetes and build more stamina needed for labor and delivery. Setting aside time to exercise will also create a time where you can relax and cool down after a hard day at work. Talk to your doctor to determine what type of exercise will be best for you.
- 4.) Reduce workload** – Be prepared to decrease your workload. Carrying a baby for nine months puts a great deal of stress on your body and because of this it is not recommended to continue to work at the level of someone who is not

pregnant. It is important for you to talk with your partner to discuss each other's responsibilities and to delegate tasks accordingly.

- 5.) Stress Reduction Techniques** – Other techniques to reduce anxiety are: deep breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation exercises, meditation, yoga, visualization techniques, tai chi, and massage therapy.

Trying to conceive can be a stressful time in any women's life, but it is important to remember that your emotional health and stress level can affect your unborn baby. Therefore, it is essential to follow these ways to cope with stress in order for your baby to have the best possible environment in which to develop.

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