

Fertility and Aging – Why It's Best Not To Wait

Your Healthy News – Fertility Newsletter

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Despite reports of women bearing healthy children well into their 50's through the aid of in-vitro fertilization, the ideal age for bearing children appears to be much lower.¹⁻⁶ The fertility of men and women alike can be affected by age, with ages beyond the late 20s to early 30s typically yielding markedly less fertility than those less than 25-30 years old.⁴⁻⁶ In addition, the health risks to the mother and the developing fetus are increased with increased maternal and paternal age.⁷⁻⁹

Studies show that conception rates among men aged 35 or older were about half that of men under 25 years old.⁴ Another study found that men aged 45 or older took 5 times longer to achieve pregnancy with their partners than men under age 25.⁵ Both studies controlled for certain confounders, such as female age and coital frequency. Decreased fertility in older men has been attributed to factors such as decreased semen volume, sperm quality and sperm motility.¹⁰

In women, the likelihood of becoming pregnant within one menstrual cycle has been shown to decline significantly around age 32 with an additional, more severe decline around age 37.⁶ This may be due in part to age-related changes in oocyte quality, ovulation frequency and efficiency, sexual function, and the general health of the uterus.¹¹

Older mothers are also at higher risks of developing pregnancy-associated health problems such as high blood pressure, excessive bleeding, and a weakened cervix.⁷ Pregnancies in women over the age of 40 have also been associated with an increased risk of spontaneous abortion.⁸ In addition, the relative risk of late-term stillbirth has been shown to be higher in women who are 35 years old or older.⁹

While conception and pregnancy may be successful at older maternal and paternal ages, the increased risk of infertility and health complications for both mother and fetus must be considered. Based on the evidence at hand, pregnancy before age 35 appears to be a healthier choice.

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