

# MISSED CONCEPTION

BY KAYCE TEO

Infertility (or subfertility) is defined as the inability to conceive after engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse for one year. Dr Jothi Kumar, gynaecologist at J Kumar O&G Clinic, says studies have come up with this guideline so couples can gauge when they should seek medical help. Here, Dr Kumar addresses the pertinent questions related to infertility.

## > How is subfertility different from infertility?

Infertility is the absolute inability for a couple to achieve a pregnancy, for example when the woman does not have a uterus or when the man does not produce any sperm. Subfertility is used when the above two conditions are not present, but the couple still do not achieve a pregnancy after trying on their own.

## > What are the top three non-medical-related causes of subfertility?

The causes are: Stress, both physical and mental; obesity, particularly in women; and ignorance about the menstrual cycle and timing of ovulation and intercourse to maximise the chance of conceiving.

## > What are the top three medical-related causes of subfertility?

Advanced age (more than 35 years old) and ovulation dysfunction in women, and male-related factors like low sperm count and poor sperm motility, are the top three medical-related causes of subfertility.

Women should maintain an appropriate BMI as ovulation dysfunction is more common when one is obese. Medication like fertility tablets can also help promote ovulation. Sperm problems are more difficult to treat, unless an underlying cause is found. Men should also maintain a proper BMI and avoid smoking.

## > What are Assisted Reproduction Techniques (ART)?

ART refers to any subfertility treatment where eggs are removed from the ovaries and fertilised with sperm outside the body to create embryos. These embryos are then replaced into the uterus to achieve a pregnancy.

Commonly referred to as test-tube baby or In-vitro-Fertilisation (IVF) treatment, these are more invasive treatments for subfertile couples with blocked, damaged or unhealthy fallopian tubes in the woman, or where semen analysis in the man shows very poor sperm count, motility and/or normal sperm shape.

In all other cases, ART is generally used as a final resort after couples fail to achieve a pregnancy following simple fertility treatments which promote ovulation in the woman and where healthy, motile sperm are separated and placed in the uterus (a technique called Intra-Uterine Insemination or IUI).



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