

# Will We Ever Get Pregnant? (Coping With Infertility)

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For most couples, the decision to get pregnant is usually a calculated and thoughtful choice that isn't easily made. There are often concerns about financial security, loss of leisure time, and questions of one's own readiness to become a parent. More often than not, one person is more ready than the other to have children. So, when there's finally consensus in a relationship to have a child, expectations for getting pregnant are usually high, and couples generally expect to get pregnant almost immediately. However, more often than not, it usually takes several months for couples to conceive.

The process of copulation is quite simple, but the chance of a viable pregnancy is not. In fact, the average chance of conceiving each month is only 15%, and the chance of spontaneous abortion is also 15%. The good news is that 85% of couples will be successful during their first year.

## Crisis

Once a couple has decided to get pregnant, and they've been unsuccessful for several months, trying to get pregnant can become burdensome, disappointing and frustrating.

Women often begin to question their ability to conceive, which in turn can create an identity crisis. Although it's not true for all women, many women partly define themselves by their gender, and their ability (or potential) to reproduce. When this ability becomes jeopardized, feelings of worry and panic become frequent. Depending on a woman's personality, she may become more determined to become pregnant, or she may seep slowly into depression.

Simultaneously, men experience the crisis in another way. Sexual intercourse becomes redefined. Sex is no longer a simple, instinctual drive that is perpetuated by visual stimulation. Instead, sex becomes deflated. It transforms into a delegated task. The original intention of sex (a desire for pleasure), succumbs to the reality that a man's genitals are solely a tool to aid a woman in reproduction. Nothing more. Nothing less.

Although a woman is not defined by her ability to conceive, and a man's task of ejaculation is not his sole purpose for existing, these ideas can still consume their thoughts. In general, couples begin to change their traditional roles regarding sex. The woman becomes more aggressive, insisting that they have sex (in order to conceive), and the man becomes more and more disinterested. A physical pinnacle of this crisis usually amounts to undesirable aggressive sexual behavior from the woman to the man, and the inability for the man to sustain an erection and ejaculate. In an oversexed society, such as ours, the disinterest from the man to the woman, and the inability of the man to perform, can create feelings of panic, devastation, and depression.

The crisis is not only confined to the bedroom. A couple is also forced to reevaluate, and in some instances become aware of for the first time, their long term expectations for their relationship and themselves. If a couple already has a preconceived notion of how their lives will unfold, and it doesn't occur, reevaluation becomes an unavoidable consequence of unfulfilled expectations and dreams. Questions that often go through couple's minds include:

- "What happens if we can't get pregnant?"
- "How far are we willing to go in order to get pregnant, and can we afford it?"
- "What will our friends and family think?"
- "How long will this take?"
- "What happens if we find out we can never have children?"

- "What if we have to adopt?"
- "How will my partner react if I end up being the reason we can't get pregnant?"

## Coping

There's no easy way to endure the inability to conceive. Anger and frustration, the pressure of time, feelings of loneliness, loss and grief, and the insidious nature of stress all contribute to lowered levels of happiness and contentment. However, there are ways to cope individually, and as a couple.

The level of couple cooperation and the quality of their communication plays an important part in how well a couple will cope. Furthermore, couples with coping strategies that involve active problem-focused planning, networking, and information seeking behavior often seem to fair much better than couples that don't.

Below are some suggestions to help couples cope with infertility:

- *Don't minimize feelings.* Feelings are there for a reason. Respect your partner's feelings and learn to embrace and accept your own.
- *Listen and talk to each other.* Listening and talking creates intimacy in your relationship, and can help encourage and strengthen each other through this difficult experience.
- *Become educated about fertility and infertility.* RESOLVE is a great place to start - <http://www.resolve.org/>.
- *Find diversions.* Although you shouldn't avoid the problem, it can often be helpful to take a break from it.
- *Don't tell everyone what's going on.* Don't tell friends or family simply because you think they should know. Instead, tell friends or family that have a history of being good listeners and encouragers. Otherwise, it could make a bad situation worse.
- *Have sex for the sake of sex.* Try to have sexual intercourse during times that are not close to ovulation. The time after a woman has stopped her period, and before she ovulates, can be a great time for a couple to have sex without the pressure to conceive.
- *Be patient.* Conceiving can take a long time. Sometimes it's best to lower your expectations, but to still keep trying. Others find it helpful to take a break, and to start trying again in a couple of months.
- *Pray and meditate.* If you are spiritually inclined, prayer and meditation can be calming, and give you a sense of peace about your situation.
- *Seek counseling.* Counselors are trained to help couples through life crisis. If possible, seek out a counselor who specializes, or has experience with infertility issues.