

GP's help counts at a testing time

So you have been trying to make babies for 12 months but nothing is happening. One thing you're probably getting plenty of at the moment is advice. Not necessarily good advice, but it's certainly varied – from oysters, to astrology charts, to making love standing on your head.

Quite frankly, well-meaning but ill-informed advice is the last thing you need. What you do need is to find a sympathetic GP and do some basic exploration about why nature isn't co-operating with your wish for a baby. Real information and a supportive medico are what you need to help you find out why it's not happening for you.

At this point some basic tests are probably recommended. They are not usually very invasive, but they will give your GP and yourselves information that may help you work out why pregnancy isn't happening.

Having a regular GP with whom you are comfortable is the biggest help. They can conduct these basic tests and are your link with fertility specialists, should you need to investigate further.

It's also important to put aside your male and female egos. The words "your fault" are not relevant to this issue. The fact that pregnancy is not occurring isn't his or her fault, it's something that isn't happening and needs to be investigated. It's vitally important that the lack of a pregnancy doesn't become his problem or her problem. If there are medical reasons associated with the male or female partner, such as him having a low sperm count or her having trouble ovulating, the couple needs to bond, not splinter apart.

It's critical that the sense of togetherness as a couple is maintained. This means talking about the outcome of the tests and how both parties feel about it. If there is a medical difficulty with one partner, he or she will be feeling pretty lousy and will need support.

Blokes sometimes really want to avoid getting their sperm count taken because they see it as a sign of failure to have to go through this indignity.

No one should feel a failure in this context, but that is easier said than done because we all have egos. If a bloke does have to do a sperm count, finding little rituals and ways to do this together is important. That might mean the female partner going with him to the clinic for a sperm count.

Just being there can make it more of a shared experience and when the test results come back, it's a good idea to go out for a coffee or a drink and talk about it. After all, no matter where the medical fertility difficulty lies, trying to make a baby involves both of you, so stay tuned into each other through this difficult process.

People handle the news that they have a fertility problem in different ways. Some respond by wanting all the information they can get about fertility treatments, others may react by putting it off and not wanting to make a decision about the next step.

When people keep hoping and don't want to know the details of why they might not be getting pregnant it's usually because they fear failure.

If we were being tested for diabetes we wouldn't think twice about it, but because fertility tests involve our sexual identities, they are far more confronting.

So the only advice worth taking if pregnancy isn't happening after 12 months of trying is to link up with a great GP. This is a situation in which three heads are definitely better than one.

Hang in there and be supported and advised by someone who can really help.

Survival tips

- **Don't listen to advice by everyone from Aunty Kath to your drinking mates**
- **Don't blame each other for not being able to get pregnant**
- **Find a sympathetic GP who can help you move forward.**