



## Garrison Medical Professional Association

Obstetrics, Gynecology and Infertility  
770 Central Avenue, Dover, NH 03820  
(603) 742-0101 • 1-800-238-7507

# Infertility Fact Sheet

### What Is Infertility?

Infertility is the inability to conceive a child. There are two types of infertility: primary and secondary. Primary encompasses women who have never had a child. Secondary includes women who have conceived in the past but cannot on later attempts. However, infertility is not solely a woman's problem. The man can just as easily be the cause of infertility in a couple. In fact, infertility treatment is more effective today because male factors are given more weight and male hormone studies are increasing.

### How Common Is Infertility?

Of the 28 million couples of childbearing age, 3 million are sterile; 2.8 million have reduced fertility, and 1.2 million will take longer to conceive, according to a study published in the *Fertility and Sterility Journal*.

### Do Male and Female Factors Play an Equal Role in Causing Infertility?

In 40 percent of cases, male factors are the cause; in the other 40 percent, female factors are the reason, and in the remaining 20 percent, there is a problem with both partners.

### How Is Infertility Treatment Determined?

The key to any successful treatment of infertility is first getting an accurate diagnosis. Our infertility specialists ask these four questions: 1) Is there an egg? Ovulation, or the release of the woman's eggs, needs to occur regularly to provide the best opportunity for pregnancy. 2) Are there enough sperm? A man must produce enough active sperm for a successful pregnancy attempt. 3) Can egg and sperm meet? This must happen for pregnancy to occur, but physical blockages may exist in either partner. 4) Can implantation occur? A fertilized egg must implant in the uterus. In most of these situations, hormone therapy or surgery can provide a solution.

### What Are Some Common Causes of Infertility?

It is important to remember that every individual is different, and every couple's situation is different. However, there are some common causes. In women, a frequent cause of infertility is lack of a regular menstrual cycle. Another common cause is a structural impairment, such as a damaged fallopian tube. This might be the result of an infection or a birth defect. Pelvic Inflammatory Disease and other sexually transmitted diseases can leave a woman sterile or with difficulty conceiving. Diseases such as endometriosis can also cause problems with conception.

In men, the most common problems are low sperm count, low sperm motility or absence of sperm. These conditions can result from disease, birth defects, and other causes.

### How Is Infertility Treated?

There is no single successful treatment for infertility. Every couple is unique and the best treatment is tailored to their medical examination. At Garrison Medical, infertility treatment begins with a consultation. Our infertility experts see both partners and obtain complete surgical and medical histories. If there are no obvious possible causes in their pasts, a basic evaluation is then done of the woman's menstrual cycle. This evaluation tracks the woman's next two menses to determine if she ovulates regularly and when she is most fertile. In some cases, the initial tracking may encompass several cycles. A complete physical is usually requested for both partners.

During the first two cycles, hormonal studies are conducted. If no possible cause is found after these preliminary steps, the couple moves through a series of tests any one of which may provide the answers. These may include a post-coital test to see if the woman's body is receptive to sperm, and a check of sperm motility. Other tests may be done to determine whether the

woman's fallopian tubes and uterine cavity are open and healthy. Finally, a laproscopy, a simple surgical procedure, may be ordered to check for signs of endometriosis, scar tissue, and the general health of the reproductive organs.

Garrison Medical believes that one of the most important things infertility patients need is a diagnosis. A pregnancy can't be guaranteed, but if couples know what they're up against, it can make a world of difference. It's a starting point towards a possible solution.

### *Why Is Education Important?*

It's important for couples to understand what's at the root of the problem. They also need to understand why various therapies are suggested, and what they may accomplish. Couples need to make informed decisions about what they may or may not try. They should also determine the pace and extent of their therapy. Not everyone wishes to follow an aggressive course of treatment. Some couples need emotional breathing space between therapies.

### *How Often Do Couples See Infertility Therapists?*

Most couples see our specialists three times over a two-month period. During that time, they do extensive work at home, monitoring their own cycles.

### *What Are Some Types of Infertility Treatment?*

Treatment ranges from better planning to medication and surgery. Hormonal medications can help with abnormal ovulation but surgery is usually needed for blockages, scarring problems and endometriosis. Surgery is also frequently the solution for male problems such as low sperm count, poor sperm motility, or undescended testicles. Artificial insemination, either with the husband's sperm or donor sperm is an option, as is in-vitro fertilization. In-vitro fertilizes an egg or eggs outside the woman's body, then implants them in the woman's uterus.

### *Why Is Counseling Recommended?*

Infertility puts a tremendous strain on a relationship and can cause feelings of anger, shame, frustration and depression. One partner may blame another, or one partner may want to continue treatment while the other is emotionally spent. The situation will either bring a couple closer together or be too stressful for them to endure.

This is why counseling is recommended — to help couples sort out their feelings and maintain their bond.

### *What Are the Drawbacks of Infertility Treatment?*

All types of infertility treatment have some drawbacks. The biggest one is cost. Therapies can run into the thousands, and some into the tens of thousands of dollars. Insurance coverage for such treatment is not guaranteed. Many infertility drugs pose the risk of multiple births, and couples — especially older couples — must ask themselves if they are ready to cope with twins or triplets if multiple fertilization occurs. Multiple births can be an emotional, physical and financial drain. In addition, any drug therapy can cause side effects. Everybody is different so the degree to which those side effects are experienced varies. Any patient on drug therapy is closely monitored. This way, problems are anticipated and drug treatment is quickly interrupted, if necessary.

### *How Successful Is Infertility Therapy?*

No therapy can guarantee a pregnancy, and those couples who do succeed may spend several months to several years undergoing treatments. Thirty-five to 50 percent of the couples achieve pregnancy after two years of treatments, and 60 to 70 percent after three years, following proper diagnosis and therapy. Any couple pursuing infertility therapy needs to be realistic and not expect results right away. Determining what the problem is takes time, and the therapy itself needs time to take effect.

### *What Infertility Services Does Garrison Medical Offer?*

Garrison Medical's infertility staff includes a reproductive endocrinology and infertility clinician, and an obstetrician-gynecologist specializing in infertility. Consultations on infertility are provided, wherein a couple's medical history is reviewed and testing prescribed, based on the information presented. Garrison Medical can provide the full range of infertility medical tests for both male and female, as needed. These tests may include lab studies, post-coital testing, female ultrasound, tubal dye studies, sperm analysis, and laproscopy for the woman. In terms of therapy, Garrison Medical offers induced ovulation, artificial insemination, and referrals for in-vitro fertilization. The infertility staff consults with the couple throughout treatment.

*If you wish additional information about infertility causes and therapies, or to make an appointment with the infertility staff, please ask at the front desk, or call Garrison Medical at 1-800-238-7507, or (603) 742-0101.*