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A SELF-TEACHING GUIDE



Understand the TYPES and CAUSES
of INFERTILITY



Discover your many TREATMENT OPTIONS



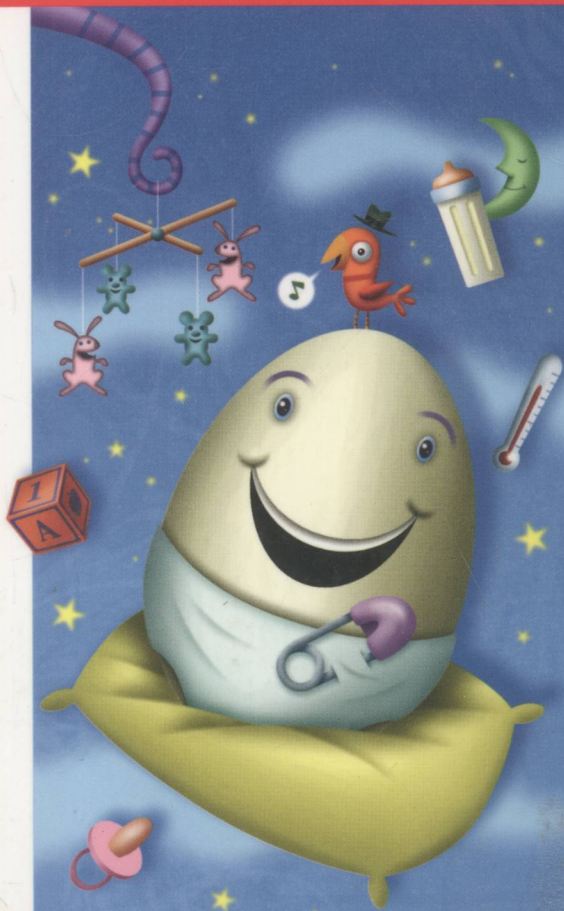
Get the scoop on DIETARY and
ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES



Save TIME and MONEY when considering
fertility treatments

Susan Warhus, M.D.

Foreword by Nathaniel Zoneraich, M.D.



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Susan Warhaus, M.D.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Susan Warhus, M.D., is a physician and a board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist. She cofounded the largest all-female practice in the state of Arizona. During her clinical practice, she had the pleasure of delivering more than three thousand babies. She is the author of *Countdown to Baby* and *Darn Good Advice—Pregnancy* and contributes to articles for various women's and health magazines.

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She would love to hear from you and can be reached through her website: askdoctor.susan.com.

*To the many women and men who long to become parents—
may your loving dreams come true.*

FOREWORD



Fertility Demystified is a great resource for women and their partners who want to become parents but are having difficulty because of fertility issues. As a practicing fertility specialist, I deal with patients and their fertility challenges every day. Most of them have great hope of becoming parents but also feel the emotional frustration and apprehension of attempting to determine their diagnosis and treatment options. This book is designed to put those of you needing fertility assistance more at ease and to provide you with some insight into what you may expect as you start or continue your journey through the sometimes confusing and seemingly overwhelming fertility process.

This book was written and reviewed as a collaboration between two doctors: an OB/GYN physician and a fertility specialist. Our goal as physicians is to provide you with the best information available so you can have the knowledge you need to make the best decisions for your individual condition.

Fertility is a complicated field of medicine that is constantly evolving as scientific breakthroughs and emerging techniques are discovered. Because it's easy to feel overwhelmed, this book has been written in a manner that is easy to understand. *Fertility Demystified* takes a logical and systematic approach to the field of fertility, which could otherwise seem difficult and complex. This book examines the potential causes of infertility and explains the various tests, procedures, and fertility drugs that you may encounter. It also provides a straightforward look at female and male anatomy to help you better understand the reproductive process. Current and emerging fertility technologies are explained in an easy to follow manner.

The book is arranged so that each major fertility topic has its own chapter. At the end of each chapter, you'll notice a summary that emphasizes the key points discussed within the chapter. You can use these summaries to refresh your memory, or you may choose to use them as an introduction to see if a specific chapter is relevant to your needs right now.

Once you have completed this book, keep it handy as a quick and practical reference guide. You may even want to take notes and/or bring it with you to your doctor



appointments. That way you can ask your own fertility specialist how a condition or treatment relates to your own particular situation.

I hope that you enjoy this book and find it to be a useful guide and resource. I wish you the very best success on your journey toward parenthood.

Nathaniel Zoneraich, M.D.

Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Back in the day, my college roommate Cathy and I were best of friends. Like so many good friends during our late teens and 20s, we shared our thoughts and emotions over relationships, career choices, and our own self-worth. We both married, and I was able to get pregnant easily. But Cathy and her husband really struggled and endured much turmoil surrounding their diagnosis of infertility. Thankfully, she and her husband eventually became parents to a beautiful baby girl. Now, some 18 years later as I write this book, thoughts of my old friend Cathy are once again in the forefront of my mind. Cathy, I want to acknowledge to you that I finally understand the difficulties that you endured during your fertility treatments. I'm so happy that you were able to realize your dreams of becoming a wonderful and loving mother.

I want to also thank my wonderful husband, Larry. Thank you so much for proof-reading this book to make sure it is easy to understand and makes common sense. You continue to amaze me as you do things for me that are far above and beyond my expectations. What a gift it is to have you as my life partner.

Thanks also to those responsible for helping me write this book. Dr. Nathaniel Zoneraich is an outstanding reproductive endocrinologist and fertility specialist. Dr. Nate, I so appreciate your expertise in the writing of this book to ensure its accuracy and relevance. Also, thank you to my editor at McGraw-Hill, Johanna Bowman. You have done a terrific job of putting everything together and making this book come to life!

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CHAPTER 1



The Causes of Infertility

Many couples who want to become pregnant often find that it's more difficult than they originally believed. Sadly, this problem is common. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, approximately 15 percent of couples in the United States may be infertile. This means that of the more than 40 million couples of childbearing age living together in the United States today, about 6 million of them may be affected by infertility issues. So if you are reading this book and have concerns about becoming pregnant, please know that you are not alone and that you have reason to feel optimistic and hopeful.

Medical research has shown that if you are a healthy young couple and have sexual intercourse a couple of times each week, your chances are about one in five (that is 20 percent) of becoming pregnant during any one menstrual cycle. This figure starts to decline in a woman's late 20s and early 30s and decreases even more after age 35. A man's fertility also declines with age, but not as early.

Many women today choose to delay parenthood because of career, finances, or other important personal reasons. Unfortunately, since they are somewhat older,



they may experience problems conceiving. But regardless of your age or particular situation, current diagnosis and treatments offer great expectations for you to successfully become a parent.

The Definition of Infertility

The medical world defines infertility as not being able to conceive after 12 months of having regular heterosexual intercourse without the use of birth control. If you are unable to become pregnant after one year of unprotected sex, talk with your doctor about an infertility evaluation for you and your partner. If you are older than 35 or have certain medical conditions, the evaluation should be done sooner than one year. In many cases, tests can be performed to determine the cause of the infertility. Based upon those test results, treatment can be tailored to your specific needs and your infertility can be treated. Lifestyle changes, medication, surgery, or assisted reproductive technologies may be recommended.

The Roller Coaster of Emotions

Finding out that you or your partner may be facing fertility problems is often difficult to handle from an emotional standpoint. It's normal to feel depressed and discouraged at times. Many couples describe their emotions as ranging from fear and stress to hope and joy. Only couples who have experienced the problem of infertility can truly understand its devastating emotional and physical impacts. Infertility evaluation and treatment can be stressful and will require a big commitment from both you and your partner. That's why the two of you should work together with a knowledgeable, compassionate doctor and medical team who are considerate and sensitive to your emotional needs.

Potential Causes of Infertility

Many factors can cause or contribute to reduced fertility. Fertility concerns may be attributed to an issue with the woman, the man, the couple, or their lifestyle. That's why you and your partner should be evaluated and treated as a couple. Some causes



may be easily found and treated, while others are more complex. In rare instances, no cause can be found at all.

Roughly speaking, about one-third of infertility cases may be attributable to the woman and another third to the man, while the last third either has to do with problems involving both partners or remains unexplained.

For women, infertility may be caused by a combination of many issues, including the following possibilities:

- Health and lifestyle choices
- Ovulation problems
- Hormonal imbalances
- Anatomical problems
- Genetic abnormalities
- Serious infections

Infertility issues for men include:

- Health and lifestyle habits
- Anatomical abnormalities and blockages
- Genetic and hormonal factors

The type of treatment you receive depends on what may be causing the infertility.

This chapter will take a closer look at the various causes of infertility and will help you determine where to focus your concerns.

Causes of Infertility: Health and Lifestyle Concerns for Women

Infertility may be caused by a variety of physical conditions and lifestyle choices. Sometimes, you can change your lifestyle habits and improve your own fertility.

ADVANCING AGE

The current social trend seems to be for women to wait longer before starting a family. Advantages to waiting to start a family include established career, financial security, and overall maturity. However, there may also be a price to pay for delayed