

IN THE PINK OF HEALTH

THE PINK PAGE

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OPENING UP ABOUT INFERTILITY

Sometime soon. Not for a few years. After being financially secure. Whether immediate or distant, a vision of the future includes the pitter-patter of little feet for most couples. However, with incidences of infertility on the rise, they are finding it harder to conceive when the time comes.

In the last 5 years alone, infertility has grown by an alarming 20-30% in both men and women. Not limited to urban areas, this disturbing trend is now surfacing in tier II and III cities as well. Medical experts attribute this rise to the trappings of today's lifestyles, marked by physical inactivity, unhealthy diets, stress and medical disorders. According to estimates, of the 60-80 million couples suffering from the disease globally, about 15-20 million are in India alone. Despite the developments in Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs), the ever-rising incidences in both female and male infertility in the country have become a huge concern for couples, doctors and society at large.

THE TRIGGERS

While sometimes infertility is caused by hereditary factors or uncontrollable health problems, medical professionals believe that certain external influences can also affect fertility. Here are some of the most common ones.

- **Environmental pollutants and high temperatures** affect sperm production in men at above normal levels of exposure.
- **Emotional stress** is another well-known trigger for infertility, though its exact role is yet to be determined. Work related stress has a

long term impact on fertility and is known to affect the release of hormones that enable sperm production in men and conception in women.

- **Excessive drinking** can affect sperm quality in men and the chances of getting pregnant in women.
- **Obesity** has also contributed to a rise in infertility as a body mass index (BMI) above 29 in both men and women lowers fertility and the chances of getting pregnant.
- **Age** is the main cause of infertility in women. Most women in India today choose to marry late and by the time they are ready to have children, they might have crossed the reproductive age.
- **Certain medical conditions like diabetes** can hamper sperm production and cause infertility.

REDUCING RISK

Medical experts have the below suggestions when it comes to reducing the risk of infertility.

- **Avoid drugs and alcohol:** Heavy alcohol and drug use increases the chance of ovulation disorders and endometriosis, which can lead to infertility.
- **Don't delay pregnancy for too long:** Fertility declines after the age of 35 and continues to decline with each passing year.
- **Maintain a healthy weight:** Being overweight or underweight can stop ovulation, leading to difficulties in getting pregnant.
- **Practice "safe sex":** This is key in preventing infertility in women. STDs can result in pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can in turn lead to infertility.

Although not typically known for romance, garlic contains an abundance of fertility boosting nutrients that makes it ideal for couples who are trying to conceive. It is a great source of the mineral selenium which is known to enhance male fertility and help prevent chromosome breakage that may play a role in early miscarriages. Garlic also contains vitamin B6 which helps regulate hormones and strengthen the immune system. If the strong smell is a problem, neutralise it with parsley. Take note of this quick recipe for a daily dose of garlic.

Garlic buttermilk

Buttermilk - 1 cup
Garlic - 4 cloves
Cumin - 1/2 tsp
Curry leaves - a handful
Salt - as required

Method

Grind garlic, cumin, curry leaves and salt to a paste. Blend the paste with buttermilk, strain and serve chilled.

The food of love: Garlic



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