Welcome to the February 2015 Fertility Flash newsletter from Medfem Fertility Clinic. Our first newsletter published in January was a resounding success and we got a lot of great feedback, thank you everyone. February is Reproductive Health Month, Ovarian Cancer Month, Healthy Lifestyle Awareness Month, as well as Valentine’s Day on the 14th February. Our newsletter this month will focus on how these topics and fertility are closely related. We would love to hear your feedback, as well as topics you would like to see covered in future issues. We can be emailed at communications@medfem.co.za

From all at Medfem Fertility Clinic

Featured Employee: Sr Heather Sparrow-IVF Nurse Coordinator

Sr Heather trained at the Johannesburg General Hospital and qualified as a registered nurse in 1981. Following this she completed her midwifery, paediatric nursing and community nursing diplomas. Heather has spent the last 11 years working within the field of assisted conception, about which she is very passionate. Prior to joining Medfem Fertility Clinic Heather worked at Johannesburg General Hospital for ten years, followed by a number of years in the obstetrics, gynaecological and infertility field. A positive and compassionate attitude towards her patients and excellent work ethics make Heather an invaluable asset to our clinic.

To see the joy on our patients faces when they get their positive pregnancy results makes all of this so worth while. And to meet those babies almost nine months later is a miracle.
No one should be deprived of the joyous experience of parenthood because they didn’t get available information on fertility preservation at such a critical time.

Each year, millions of men and women under the age of 40 are diagnosed with cancer. While most of these cancer patients face excellent prospects for survival, one of the very unfortunate side effects of treatment is permanent infertility. Fortunately advances in both fertility preservation and infertility treatments are occurring at a rapid rate presenting viable options for cancer patients.

**Female Fertility Preservation**

Cancer treatments on women pose a variety of reproductive risks including immediate infertility, premature menopause, and a compromised ability to carry a pregnancy to term due to cervical or uterine damage. Chemotherapy and radiation, both common cancer treatments, can cause permanent damage or destroy oocytes and follicles. This can lead to menopause for years after treatment. Other treatments such as surgery to remove the ovaries, fallopian tubes or uterus can drastically impair the ability to become pregnant or carry a baby. The most proven and successful method of fertility preservation for women is embryo freezing. This involves undergoing IVF, retrieving as many viable eggs as possible, fertilising the eggs in a laboratory, followed by vitrification freezing. Patients who are single or do not have a male partner to provide sperm for the creation of embryos can consider egg freezing. Patients who do not have time for ovarian stimulation can consider experimental options such as ovarian tissue freezing which involves the removal, sectioning and freezing of ovarian tissue. These ovarian tissues can later be transplanted to restore hormonal function and for use with IVF.

**Male Fertility Preservation**

Male fertility can be harmed by the surgical removal of the testicles or by chemotherapy or radiation that damages sperm quantity, quality or DNA, and can cause azoospermia. Sperm cryopreservation (freezing) is a highly effective technique to preserve male fertility. It is strongly recommended that sperm are collected prior to initiation of treatment because the quality of the sample and sperm DNA integrity may be compromised even after a single treatment session. Although planned chemotherapy may limit the number of ejaculates, intracytoplasmic sperm injection allows the successful freezing and future use of a very limited amount of sperm.

**What You Can Do**

A diagnosis of cancer is devastating and making early parenthood decisions at such a time can be very difficult. It is however imperative to perform egg/sperm freezing prior to any chemotherapy or radiation treatment as potential damage can lead to infertility in both males and females. Cancer therapy can destroy a person’s fertility and their chances of having a family. Your risk of being infertile after cancer treatment depends on the type of treatment, your pre-treatment fertility status, and your age. Your oncologist can give you an estimate of the likelihood that your treatment will decrease your fertility.

Medfem Fertility Clinic is keeping hope alive by offering the opportunity to freeze eggs and sperm before treatment. If you are facing a medical treatment such as chemotherapy, radiation or surgery that may affect your fertility, we may be able to help you. In these circumstances, we often need to take action prior to the medical treatment. Therefore, we try to see all urgent cases within 24 hours of having received a referral from your physician.

If you or someone you know has been recently diagnosed with cancer that can impact their future fertility, call our offices immediately at +27 (11) 463 2244 to schedule a consultation.
Get the Basics Right First
The number of couples experiencing fertility problems is increasing exponentially. The reason for this increase in fertility problems is directly related to certain lifestyle changes that have taken place in the last 30 years. These lifestyle issues include an increased incidence of time urgency perfectionism (TUP) stress, poor dietary habits and poor nutrition. Smoking and excessive alcohol have been shown to reduce infertility. Getting these lifestyle basics right will not only improve your fertility health but also your general health.

Medfem Fertility Clinic offers world class advanced fertility treatments including laparoscopic fertility surgery and assisted reproduction including artificial insemination, in vitro fertilisation, intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection, assisted hatching and pre-genetic embryo biopsy. However our philosophy at Medfem Fertility Clinic is to achieve a pregnancy as naturally as possible. This can be achieved by the infertile couple taking charge of their lifestyles. By improving your lifestyle you will go a long way to improving your fertility. Let’s look at factors which can influence the health of eggs and sperm. Some factors can be modified by changing behaviours; others can’t.

Maximising egg and sperm quality is based on maximising your overall health. The most important factors include diet, environmental influences, hormonal issues and stress. Before ovulation, an egg’s cycle is around 90 days and sperms around 72 days, during which time the quality of the eggs or sperm can be affected by different aspects, such as nutrition, oxygenation, proper blood circulation, the balance of the hormones, the mood of the woman or man, and stress. Leading a healthy lifestyle, reducing stress, and keeping a healthy weight are things you can do to try and improve your fertility.

Diet: Nutrition is important and you should pay attention to what you eat. Follow a healthy and nutritive diet to keep your body healthy and energetic. Stay away from bad foods like caffeine, sugar and alcohol. Lean meat, seafood, eggs, vegetables, oils, whole grains, nuts and seeds are abundant with vitamin rich nutrients. Avoid processed foods because they do not provide you with all the nutrients whole foods contain.

Drink plenty of water: Good oxygenation and blood circulation are necessary to grow healthy eggs. Adequate hydration will stimulate circulation and in turn lead to improved uterine health.

Supplements: Certain supplements are known to have a very positive effect on fertility health. The supplements we suggest are StaminoGro and Comega Vite.

Environmental Influences: Your environment can affect your health and in turn your fertility. Where possible try to:
• Quit smoking
• Avoid second hand smoke
• Reduce stress
• Eat natural foods
• Purify your drinking water

Stress: Stress can prevent ovulation so try and relax as much as possible. Constant stress depletes the body’s resources and if the body lacks resources then egg production is likely to become inefficient.

For more information on how to improve your lifestyle visit http://www.medfem.co.za/how-can-you-prepare
Valentine’s Day has come and gone, but that does not mean you can’t make an effort to keep the love alive throughout the rest of the year. If you are struggling with infertility, love and romance may feel like they have flown out the window with all of the pressure and stress you have been facing. Unending medical procedures and escalating expenses can erode affection or even love between partners.

If all you can think about is trying to conceive, then the pressure to be loving and romantic can feel daunting. On top of that if you are taking fertility drugs you could also be dealing with symptoms such as bloating and mood swings.

Whatever you may be feeling, it is important to remember to work on your relationship with your partner to keep the love alive. Here are some tips for reconnecting with your partner that you can use any time of the year to rekindle the passion in your relationship. And remember, let Valentine’s Day be a reminder that beneath your efforts to conceive, there is an ‘us’ that needs to be cherished and nurtured.

• Spend some time doing the things you love as a couple - take this day as a time to celebrate "us" instead of focusing on your trouble conceiving.
• Take time to remember what made you fall in love in the first place, talk about your first dates. What made you laugh when you first met? What is it about your partner that made you want to raise a family together? What were the early challenges in your relationship, and think about how you’ve grown together? This may bolster the desire to stay connected as a couple and be happy, no matter what is happening in your lives.
• Celebrate. Share a romantic dinner for two and exchange meaningful gifts. You have the right to celebrate yourselves as a couple and the union you share.
• Make passionate love. Forget about trying to conceive, your ovulation date or the end result, and enjoy each other the old-fashioned way, for love and pleasure. Shut off your mind and enjoy being physical with your partner.
• Treat yourself to a pick-me-up. Why not shop for a dress, or lingerie, or a new outfit (for him) that makes you feel gorgeous and re-kind the flame.
• Let it go for a day. Infertility has a way of taking over every second of existence, diminishing the joy and simple pleasures of day-to-day living. Practice letting it go for a day and encourage each other to experience happiness in little ways versus concentrating on the unending aspects of pain and sadness.
• Do something relaxing. Get a couple’s massage, go to a spa, catch a movie – whatever it is that helps you both to relax and unwind.

Connecting with your strength, compassion and the love you have for each other will serve to make you both stronger. And the challenges we face in life are always easier to bear as a united front than on our own. You will need the reassurance of your partners love at some point in your infertility journey.

“Sometimes the smallest things take up the most room in your heart”.

Your Relationship and Infertility - Keeping the Love Alive
Reproductive Health Month

February is Reproductive Health Month and the Infertility Awareness Association of South Africa (IFAASA) is putting the disease of infertility in focus, with the theme for 2015 being “Will Your Fertility Stand the Test of Time?”

For years, infertility has been somewhat of a taboo subject, something that people hid from the world and didn’t talk about. As part of Reproductive Health Month 2015, IFAASA not only encourages couples to seek help to ensure a proper diagnosis and informed decision, but also seeks to empower the general population to educate themselves about infertility and to remember that pregnancy is a privilege that not every couple is afforded. The educational initiative is being backed by a number of SASREG accredited clinics who have pledged that consultations booked in the month of February will be eligible for a 20% discount on the first consultation and scan.

Medfem Fertility Clinic is proud to be supporting this initiative. All initial consultations booked in the month of February will receive a 20% discount. To take advantage of this offer you will need to register at http://www.ifaasa.co.za/landing-page/reproductive-health-month/#Form You will then receive a unique code with which you can make your booking at 011 462 2244.

For couples struggling with infertility, education and early diagnosis is vital. It is important to see a specialist for a complete fertility work-up and diagnosis.

Warning Signs of Infertility

Female Warning Signs
- Patients under 35 who have been trying to conceive for more than 12 months
- Patients 35 years and older who have been trying to conceive for more than 6 months
- Irregular cycles or if a diagnosis of PCOS has been made
- Pain during menstruation and/or intercourse or if a diagnosis of endometriosis has been made
- Previous surgery in the pelvis
- A history of PID (Pelvic infection) or Sexually transmitted disease
- BMI of more than 30
- Patients who have had (or are planning to have) cancer treatment
- Patients 35 and older who are not in a relationship may consider egg freezing

Male Warning Signs
- Previous Sexually Transmitted Disease
- Previous testicular surgery or trauma
- Men who experiences chronic pain in the genital area
- The use of anabolic steroids or gym supplements
- A history of mumps during teenage years
- Excessive smoking, alcohol use and/or illicit drug abuse
- BMI of more than 30
- Men with erectile dysfunction
- Patients who have had (or are planning to have) cancer therapy
FEBRUARY IS REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH MONTH

WILL YOUR FERTILITY STAND THE TEST OF TIME?

ARE YOU INFERTILE?

1 IN 6 COUPLES are diagnosed with infertility.

The following warning signs can be an indication of infertility and may necessitate the intervention of a fertility specialist to help you fall pregnant.

FEMALE FACTORS

OLDER THAN 35 YEARS OLD who have been trying to conceive for MORE THAN 6 MONTHS

YOUNGER THAN 35 YEARS OLD who have been trying to conceive for MORE THAN 12 MONTHS

A HISTORY OF PID OR STD (Pelvic Infection or Sexually Transmitted Diseases)

IRREGULAR CYCLES or if a DIAGNOSIS OF PCOS has been made

PREVIOUS SURGERY in the pelvis

PATIENTS > 35 YEARS OLD who are not in a relationship may consider EGG FREEZING

CANCER DIAGNOSIS

MALE FACTORS

THE USE OF ANABOLIC STEROIDS OR GYM SUPPLEMENTS

PREVIOUS STD (Sexually transmitted Diseases)

MEN WITH FERTILITY PROBLEMS

PAIN DURING MENSTRUATION AND/or INTERCOURSE or if a diagnosis of ENDOMETRIOSIS has been made

PREVIOUS TESTICULAR SURGERY OR TRAUMA

A HISTORY OF COCLUSION

MEN WHO EXPERIENCE CHRONIC PAIN IN THE GENITAL AREA

PREVIOUS MUMPS DURING TEENAGE YEARS

Patients who have had a cancer diagnosis

Patients who have had a cancer diagnosis

GO TO WWW.IFAASA.CO.ZA TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP IN GETTING YOUR FERTILITY ASSESSED

IFAASA
Infertility Awareness Association of South Africa

IFAASA is the only South African NPC dedicated to educating and advocating for those suffering from infertility

BREAK THE SILENCE
When to Test for Infertility

We believe that anyone worried about their fertility should take immediate steps to have their situation assessed. Immediate evaluation and treatment of infertility is warranted in cases of known problems such as anovulation, tubal occlusion, and severe male factor infertility. Otherwise the standard guideline is that an evaluation of infertility is warranted for a couple when the female partner is older than 35 and has been trying to conceive for 6 months without success. It is also indicated if the female partner is 35 years of age or less after the couple has been trying to conceive for one year. We also must be aggressive in evaluating and treating women 40 years and greater because of the increased potential for significant loss of ovarian reserve in this age group.

For further information on Infertility Testing visit http://www.medfem.co.za/where-to-start

Facebook? Blog? Pinterest?

Social media is changing how Medfem Fertility Clinic connects with the world. We can now be found on Facebook, Pinterest, Youtube, Linked-In and Google+. Along with our new website, we’ve launched a blog to talk about current fertility topics. Visit www.medfem.co.za for quick links to our social media pages and our informative blog. Following us on Facebook will allow you to stay informed about our latest articles, events and more.

Latest Blog Posts

- Valentine’s Day and Infertility – Keeping the Love Alive
- World Cancer Day – Do You Need To Preserve Your Fertility?
- Can I Improve My Egg Quality?
- Tips For A More Fertile 2015
- How Our Laboratory Maintains Its Golden Standard
- Embryo Grading
- http://www.medfem.co.za/blog

Patient Testimonials

Tell us your Medfem Fertility Clinic story! We would love to share your experience of how Medfem helped grow your family. Please know that all testimonials will be posted anonymously, unless you give us permission to use your name. Email us at: communications@medfem.co.za

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