

Natural conception & functional issues

Coital frequency is often overlooked and in my experience is a common finding in couples trying to conceive, especially in older couples. It is not uncommon for couples to consummate once or twice a month only when they have been together for >24 months. The couples often want to 'time' the intercourse to be on the day of ovulation, and probably as a result, miss it.

Ovulation occurs at a very defined period in the cycle. The period from ovulation to a bleed is usually fixed and it usually occurs 12-16 days before the onset of the menstrual cycle. For e.g. a woman with 28-day cycles, will have the ovulation on day 12-16, whilst with 34-day cycles, ovulation will be on (34 minus 12-16) day 18-22. Once the egg is released, there is a 12-hour window for sperm to fertilise the egg before the egg atrophies. The chances of conception with intercourse post ovulation, is lower when compared to intercourse 4 to 5 days prior. This is because the sperm can live in utero for up to 5 days within the fallopian tubes for ovulation to occur.

Various methods have been used to pin point ovulation, including LH test kits, oestrogen peak kits, basal body temperature measurements and cervical mucous. The LH kits are most accurate, but can be expensive especially in women with irregular periods. Menstrual APP's rely on the principles outlined above in predicting that ovulation occurs 14 days prior to the anticipated subsequent period start date. With the aforementioned, it is important to have sex earlier than the anticipated ovulation date, so as to ensure that sperm is present when ovulation occurs.

Couples also are not aware that most brands of lubricants are in fact, toxic to sperm. I recommend not using lubrication. Vaginal dryness is often a sign of insufficient arousal and longer time may be given to foreplay. If lubrication is needed then a water-based solution is preferred. Two commonly known brands are "conceive plus" or "Pre-seed" which appear to have less impact on sperm when studied.

Commercially made kits such as 'Mosie Baby' are available for self insemination. The self-insemination should take place every 2-3 days starting a number of days leading up to the anticipated ovulation date. It is helpful to have frequent ejaculation but perhaps limit intercourse to every alternate day to maintain counts and motility.

Frequent natural intercourse starting a few days prior to ovulation is probably the best way to achieve natural conception., and any specific functional issue can be addressed specifically with their specialists.

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