

Getting Pregnant After 40 - What You Need to Know

by Iva Keene MRMed. ND. - Natural Fertility Specialist - Thursday, June 02, 2011

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What's the secret to getting pregnant after 40 quickly?

You need to know the health issues common in older women and what you have to do to achieve getting pregnant after 40 and having a healthy pregnancy.

Women have a biological clock because they are born with a limited egg cell count. That is, sooner or later your eggs will lose quality and decrease in quantity. When you are older, the risks involved in getting pregnant become more common and so are worthy of discussion.

Once you are over 30, getting pregnant may take longer since your eggs may not get fertilized as quickly as before since women in their 30s and above have eggs of lower quality than women in their 20s. Ovulation may be less frequent and you may experience irregular menstruation. BUT, it doesn't mean you can't have a successful pregnancy. You just have to be more patient and take better care of yourself. If you are actively trying to conceive but to no avail, you should consider following a proven preconception program to optimize your egg health when getting pregnant after 40.

A word of warning. The widespread use of fertility drugs and other assisted reproductive technologies (ART) has led to an increased risk among older women of bearing twins. There is also an increased risk of other complications.

Older women are also more prone to develop gestational diabetes which is a type of diabetes that appears during pregnancy. You can prevent gestational diabetes from developing by regulating your blood sugar levels.

Eat healthy, balanced meals, exercise regularly and lead a healthy lifestyle. Although rare, you may have to take medication to control your blood sugar levels. It is important you manage your gestational diabetes because it may lead to heavy fetal growth (your baby may be too large). You may sustain more delivery-related injuries when your baby is too big.

The older you are, the more you are likely to need a Caesarean-section delivery. Complications such as placenta previa tend to be more common in women getting pregnant after 40 years and older. Placenta previa is a condition where the cervix is blocked by the placenta and surgery is needed to deliver the baby.

Chromosomal aberrations, such as Down's syndrome, are more common in babies born from mothers who are getting pregnant after 40 and above. Miscarriage also tends to be more common. This is because as you become older, your womb tends to be more fragile. The possibility of conceiving a child with chromosomal abnormalities may also play a role in high miscarriage rates in older women.

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The biological father's age can also be a major contributor to birth defects and developmental problems in newborns. There are studies that suggest children born to fathers aged 40 years and older have increased risks of autism compared to children born to fathers aged 30 years and younger. Also, much older men (50 years and above) are at a higher risk of fathering children with certain birth defects because of the mutations in baby's genes.

One such example of a birth defect is achondroplasia which is a bone growth disorder. Children with older fathers are also at a higher risk of having cognitive impairment. These children are more likely to have problems with reading, memory, concentration, and reasoning.

Schedule a preconception appointment with your naturopath. Have your GP and gynecologist examine you before getting pregnant after 40. Your health as well as your lifestyle and diet should be assessed. Your health team may suggest a few changes and improvements as to how you eat and live to make you more prepared for the task ahead - pregnancy.

Take supplements so that you have an adequate supply of calcium, iron, folic acid, protein and other essential nutrients. Watch your weight gain carefully during the pregnancy. A gain of 25 to 35 pounds is a safe weight gain for pregnancy.

Because getting pregnant after 40 may be difficult (but not impossible), you have to make a lot of healthy choices. Taking good care of your health is the best way to have a healthy and successful pregnancy at 20, 30 or 40.

Some women can make it without any difficulties when getting pregnant after 40 and bear healthy children. However for most women who indulge in the modern lifestyle: regular alcohol intake, oral contraceptive pills for 5+ years, a few cups of coffee a day, fast food, unbalanced and irregular meals, smoking, recreational drugs, lack of exercise and high stress levels - a minimum of 4 months of preconception care including a series of tests and a serious detox will be required for a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

What do you think about getting pregnant after 40? Did you or do you know of someone who got pregnant after the first try in their 40s? Would like to hear from you!

Source:

Mayo Clinic. 2011. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER). 15 April 2011
<http://www.mayoclinic.com>