

the pharmacy

Trying to conceive with no luck

Q My husband and I have been trying to conceive our first child for over nine months with no luck. I am 30 years old and am becoming concerned. What can I do to increase our chances?

A Although the classic definition of infertility means not conceiving after one year of unprotected intercourse, many couples like yourself begin to worry before this one-year mark. Luckily, there are many things you can do with the help of your local pharmacist to enhance your chances of conceiving.

Over 85 per cent of the time, failing to conceive is due to:

- Not having intercourse at the right time;

- Abnormal ovulation or hormone cycles;
- Lack of healthy sperm; or
- Fallopian tubes being blocked.

You can rule out some of these problems by keeping careful notes of your cycle and when you have sex.

Choose the best time for intercourse by using a method to determine when you are fertile either by tracking cervical mucus (where it would appear to be clear and elastic, like raw egg white) and basal body temperature changes (where a small rise in body temperature of at least 0.2°C would be detected), or by using an ovulation prediction test (using either saliva or urine).

Taking the time for relaxed, enjoyable intercourse is important as this can allow the man to make more sperm. Also, make sure you don't

kill sperm by using common personal lubricants or moisturisers.

Over 75 per cent of women who are trying to conceive report increased vaginal dryness from the stress of timed intercourse during their fertile period and/or from medications which stimulate ovulation, like clomiphene.

Lubricants with glycerin or propylene glycol kill sperm and should be avoided at this time. Instead, look for a product at your local pharmacy that has been proven to not harm sperm.

Additionally, products with arabinogalactan (a plant anti-oxidant present in many traditional herbal therapies) such as Pre-Seed® can enhance sperm function after ejaculation. This product is available at KK Women's and Children's Hospital, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics, Jurong Medical Centre and Nishino Pharmacy.

If you still cannot conceive after implementing these changes, it is probably time to visit your physician to check out sperm counts, egg quality and fallopian tube status.

DR JOANNA ELLINGTON, reproductive physiologist, and pharmacist CHUA YEW LAN
KK Women's and Children's Hospital and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore

More information and advice can be obtained from your pharmacist.