

FIVE MYTHS ABOUT INFERTILITY

About one in six couples of childbearing age experience fertility problems. The subject of infertility is surrounded by many myths, so let's consider a few of them, along with the truth.

Myth 1: Infertility and sterility are the same thing.

Truth: Infertility is not sterility. Infertility is the inability to conceive after one year of unprotected relations and/or the inability to carry a pregnancy to term. "Secondary infertility" is the diagnosis when couples who have had one child or more are unable to conceive or carry to term again.

Myth 2: Failure to relax is the main cause of infertility.

Truth: Common causes of infertility in the female are ovulation or hormonal problems, endometriosis, anti-sperm or anti-embryo antibodies, blockage that prevents eggs and sperm from meeting, and structural or functional problems with the uterus or cervix. In men infertility is caused by poor sperm penetration or maturation, hormonal problems, and blockages of the male reproductive tract. Infertility is rarely caused by stress—but it causes a lot of stress for many couples. Ninety-five percent of the time infertility is due to diagnosable medical factors.

Myth 3: Infertility is a woman's problem.

Truth: The diagnosis "infertility" is shared about equally between men and women. About 30 percent of infertility problems are due to female factors, 30 are due to male factors, and 35 percent are a combination of both. The other five percent are unexplained.

Myth 4: Couples who adopt have a better chance of getting pregnant.

Truth: Adoption is not a cure for infertility, which is what such a statement is usually intended to suggest. And the chances of an infertile couple conceiving are unaffected by adoption.

Myth 5: Infertile couples are "having a lot of fun trying" to have a baby.

Fifty-six percent of couples experiencing infertility report a decrease in the frequency of their intimate relationship. Both women (59%) and men (42%) report a decrease in their level of satisfaction, and infertile couples overall report having five times the sexual difficulties of fertile couples as a result of their infertility.

If you have friends who are infertile, the best way to encourage them is to refrain from giving advice, especially if it involves one of the above myths. The better way? Weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15).

Dr. Sandra Glahn is the author or coauthor of nineteen books. Her non-fiction titles related to infertility are *When Empty Arms Become a Heavy Burden* (Kregel) and *The Infertility Companion* (Zondervan/Christian Medical Association). Infertility also appears as a theme in her coauthored Christy Award finalist, *Lethal Harvest*. You can find her online at www.aspire2.com, Facebook: Aspire2, and Twitter: @sandraglahn