

How Smoking Affects Your Fertility



Infertility specialist Dr. Ranjana Dhanu, Consultant Obstetrician Gynaecologist, Hinduja Healthcare Surgical, highlights the ill effects of smoking on the fertility of couples who are anxious to conceive.

Several studies have shown that smoking affects both partners considerably, and that passive smokers suffer a substantial risk as well.

Here's how smoking affects the reproductive systems of women:

- Menstrual and ovulatory dysfunction.
- Pre-mature menopause.
- Implantation defects and a higher risk of miscarriages.
- Genetic defects in the baby.
- Growth retardation and premature birth of the baby.
- In extreme cases where pregnant mothers continue to smoke during pregnancy, there is a substantial risk of foetal death in-utero.

Most of the above mentioned ill-effects are due to nicotine and reduced oxygenation of tissues.

Here's how smoking affects the reproductive systems of men:

Studies conducted at fertility clinics across the globe suggest that smoking affects sperm motility, penetrability and reproductive capacity by causing an alteration in the DNA and the genetic makeup of the person, thereby contributing to a rising incidence of infertility in men. Some men may also suffer erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation along with reduced sperm count as a result of smoking.

So, what to do if you're planning to conceive?

The ill effects of smoking can be countered by quitting the habit for a year. It is advisable for couples to refrain from active or passive smoking for at least 3 months before they try to get pregnant. If either or both the partners have been chronic smokers then a visit to a chest physician is mandatory to assess the extent of damage to lung function. Adopting a healthy lifestyle and quitting smoking with a multi-pronged approach that includes a healthy diet rich in organic foods and antioxidants, exercise and pre-conception vitamins in the form of folic acid and multivitamins can help reverse the ill effects of smoking.

What are the other risks of smoking?

Besides fertility, the systemic risks of smoking include an increased risk of lung and oropharyngeal cancer, osteoporosis and peripheral vascular disease in both sexes. Women who smoke chronically are also at an increased risk of breast cancer and premature menopause.

Remember, it is never too late to quit!

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