

PATIENT'S FACT SHEET

Infertility Counseling and Support: When and Where To Find It

Infertility is a medical condition that touches all aspects of your life. It may affect your relationships with others, your perspective on life, and how you feel about yourself. How you deal with these feelings will depend on your personality and life experiences. Most people can benefit from the support of family, friends, medical caregivers, and professional counselors. When considering infertility treatment options such as sperm, egg, and embryo donation or gestational carriers, it may be especially helpful to gain the assistance of an infertility counselor. The following information may help you decide if you need to seek professional help in managing the emotional stresses associated with infertility or need assistance in decisions regarding your treatment options.

WHEN DO I NEED TO SEE AN INFERTILITY COUNSELOR?

Consider counseling if you are feeling depressed, anxious, or so preoccupied with your infertility that you feel it is hard to enjoy life. You may also want to consider counseling if you are feeling "stuck" and need to sort out your options and alternatives. Signs that you might benefit from counseling include:

- persistent feelings of sadness, guilt, or worthlessness
- social isolation
- loss of interest in usual activities and relationships
- depression
- agitation and anxiety
- increased mood swings
- constant preoccupation with infertility
- marital discord
- difficulty concentrating and remembering
- increased use of alcohol or drugs
- a change in appetite, weight, or sleep patterns thoughts about suicide or death
- difficulty with scheduled intercourse

WHERE CAN I GET SUPPORT?

Support can come from many different areas. Books can offer information and understanding about the emotional aspects of infertility. Support groups and meetings can reduce the feeling of isolation and provide an opportunity to learn from others who are experiencing infertility. Individual and couple counseling offer the chance to talk with an experienced professional who will help you sort out your feelings, identify coping mechanisms, and help you choose solutions to your problems. Discussions with family members and friends are also options.

HOW DO I FIND AN INFERTILITY COUNSELOR AND OTHER SUPPORT?

Start by asking your physician for a list of books, support resources, and trained counselors in your area who have experience dealing with infertility. Counselors may be psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, psychiatric nurses, or marriage and family counselors. You may obtain additional information on the American Society for Reproductive Medicine's Web site at www.asrm.org. Click on Patient Information for resources and a list of doctors and counselors in your area.

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