



Weight and Fertility

How do I know if my weight is ideal for pregnancy?

Body mass index (BMI) helps determine if you are underweight or overweight. It is a numerical value of your weight in relation to your height.

What is a healthy BMI?

An ideal BMI should fall into the range of 19-24. If your BMI is less than 19, you are considered underweight, if it's between 25-29, you are considered overweight. A BMI greater than 30 is considered obese.

What is the impact of a women's weight on fertility?

For some woman, being underweight, overweight or obese may create difficulty in getting pregnant due to ovulation problems, a condition in which ovaries fail to release eggs.

A BMI of 18.5 or less may lead to irregular menstrual cycles and ovulation cessation. Obesity is associated with similar problems in menstruation and ovulation. Sometimes, ovulation may be normal, but you may still not be able to conceive. A thorough preconception evaluation can help identify other obesity-related health problems such as insulin resistance, thyroid disease and diabetes, which could be affecting your fertility.

How does obesity affect the outcomes of fertility treatment and giving birth to a healthy baby?

Various studies indicate that obesity is associated with low rate of success with in vitro fertilization (IVF). Pregnancy rates are lower and miscarriage rates are higher. Moreover, the woman is at an increased risk of developing high blood pressure (pre-eclampsia), pregnancy-induced (gestational) diabetes and delivery by cesarean section. Children born to an obese mother also have higher birth weight and are at a greater risk of some birth defects.

Do obese men also have fertility problems?

Yes, even men suffer from fertility problems associated with obesity such as low sperm motility and total count. There may also be changes in testosterone and other hormones responsible for reproduction.

Do I need to achieve a healthy weight before trying to get pregnant, if I am obese?

If you are overweight or obese and are planning to get pregnant, you should first consult your doctor, who will consider your age and other fertility factors before advising you if you should lose weight for a healthy pregnancy. Your doctor may recommend diet and lifestyle changes along with a group support program, provided your age and BMI is not above 40. For BMI greater than 40, your doctor may suggest weight loss surgery (bariatric surgery).

What do I do if I am overweight and suffer from polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)?

About 8-10% of women suffer from PCOS. PCOS is not necessarily associated with overweight or obesity, but women with PCOS may show signs of obesity and/or insulin resistance. While a healthy diet and regular exercise can regularize your menstrual cycles and ovulation, PCOS may require further treatment such as medications to be able to conceive. An infertility specialist and reproductive endocrinologist will help you manage PCOS and increase your chances of conceiving.