

How to communicate with couples seeking fertility care

Suggest self-care and relaxation – but not as a cure for infertility

When you tell an infertile couple they just need to relax, it implies that their anxiety is causing their infertility. Once a couple is diagnosed with infertility there is most likely a physical problem that is preventing conception.

It is acceptable to talk to your patients about self care or alternative therapies to help mitigate anxiety, but be clear that this is suggested for general health and well-being and not as a cure for infertility.

**Advice for
Health Care
Providers**

Pay attention to younger couples too

Couples with a medical problem preventing conception may spend years in fertility treatment. Even for young couples, it is best to identify the problem without delay so they can pursue treatment (if they choose) before age-related infertility becomes an additional factor.

Treat couples with compassion

Health care providers routinely treat patients and families who are dealing with loss, denial or struggle to accept life-changing diagnoses. A diagnosis of infertility should be treated the same way. Attempts to minimize the importance of infertility or encourage patients to “move on” are likely to be hurtful.

Recognize secondary infertility

Just because one or both partners have had children before does not rule out a new cause for infertility. Couples who already have a child should be assessed and treated the same as childless couples if they present with a fertility concern. A diagnosis of infertility is just as significant, and just as painful, for those who already have a child.

Support informed decision-making

After a full fertility evaluation, a specialist may identify some treatment options for your patients to explore. All treatments involve time, stress and money, and success is not guaranteed. In- Vitro Fertilization (IVF) is statistically the most successful treatment, but the cost (especially with multiple tries) may put it outside the reach of many couples.

When the time comes to make treatment choices, patients may find that things are moving very quickly and they don't have much time to think. Health care providers can help their patients to find up-to-date information about treatment options early in the process so they can consider their available options.

Support your patient's decision

It is often difficult for health care providers, friends and family to watch couples go through several unsuccessful fertility treatments. However, it is generally not helpful to advise these couples to stop trying to have a child, or to suggest adoption or other options. A decision to stop fertility treatment will happen in due course for those couples whose fertility journey does not end with having a biological child.

Find more information: www.sasksurgery.ca/provider/fertilitycare.html