

fertility   
associates



# Navigating the ups and downs

A guide for partners and support people

Practical tips and guidance for supporting those close to you – be it your partner, friend, daughter, son or they – through their treatment journey.

Many people have likened fertility treatment to a roller coaster. The emotional ups and downs as you and your partner or support person travel through treatment can impact on not only your relationship, but every aspect of your life.

Some feel that they do not have any sense of control over what is happening. They sit by and watch as their partner goes through a series of scans, blood tests, injections, more scans, more blood tests, egg retrieval, embryo transfer and the long wait for the pregnancy result, while at the same time trying to carry on with some semblance of a normal work and home life.

## Having treatment

Fertility treatment is generally intense and often complex. It's also hard for those who make the journey alone. Being alone may mean remembering a lot and often coping with the effects of treatment and its outcome by yourself.

Many people find the following to be useful:

- bring someone you trust to appointments even if they sit in the waiting room
- debrief with them while the information is fresh in your memory
- keep a journal to know where you are up to
- alert a support person when you feel you may get bad news
- use the clinic counsellors.



Go to The  
Wellness Lab



## Ways in which you can offer support

### For partners

- organise something indulgent for your partner who is going through treatment
- help remind them when injections or medications are to be taken
- offer to help with their injections
- come to as many appointments and scans with them as reasonably possible
- respect each other's privacy with regards to treatment. Perhaps decide who you are going to tell and what you are going to tell them before treatment starts – you may not want the world to know. It is also important to think about how many people you will have to tell if treatment is not successful this time.
- don't pack the household calendar with too many social events
- ask them what you can do to help
- if you already have children, remember the fertility medications may make your partner extra tired and possibly not as even-tempered as normal!
- perhaps organise some extra help around the house
- but most importantly, remember you are doing this together and your relationship is the most important thing.

### For family and friends

- ask them what you can do to help
- respect their privacy – don't tell everyone what your son, daughter or friend is going through.

Generally, IVF takes two to six weeks to reach embryo transfer and then another two weeks until a pregnancy test can be done and the outcome of the treatment is known. In some cases, treatment may be stopped midway through the cycle due to a poor response to the fertility medications or a concern about the way the cycle is proceeding.

Timeline	Phase of treatment	Emotional state
Month before	Following the first day of her period, the woman may sometimes start pill-based medication and in some treatment, protocols also start injections.	Calm and optimistic but anxious about what is to come. Some people may feel excited that treatment is finally underway after a long wait.
Week 1 to 2	Usually daily injections. This is also the time when many blood tests and scans will be done.	Anxiety is starting to rise, but patients are still optimistic about treatment as they are still actively involved in the process. This is also a time when the hormone medications can cause huge mood swings and tiredness. Patience is essential at this stage.
Week 3 to 4	Egg collection, fertilisation, and embryo development.	High anxiety, and high focus on the number of eggs retrieved and the number fertilised.
The 2 week wait	Wait for pregnancy blood test which is done on day 14 after the egg collection. This will indicate whether you are pregnant or not.	High stress and very emotional time. Most international research quotes this as the period when patients experience the highest levels of stress.
Pregnant or not pregnant	Pregnancy result is received.	If the result is a negative pregnancy test, this can be a time of disappointment and even depression. However, if there is the opportunity to continue with another course of treatment, patients may feel a little bit more positive. If the pregnancy result is positive, this may still be a time of high anxiety as you wait to see if the pregnancy is ongoing.



What happens in IVF?



Understanding the IVF cycle