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CONDITIONS & TREATMENTS: METHODS OF EVALUATING INFERTILITY (FEMALE & MALE)

Infertility can be caused by the dysfunction of one or more reproductive organs of either the male or female. Endometriosis, amenorrhea, ovarian dysfunction, and uterine disorders are just a few conditions that can cause female infertility. More than one cause of infertility can be present at a time. A woman who suspects she is infertile should seek a thorough medical examination by an infertility specialist. It is very important that the male partner be evaluated as well since 40% of the time there is a male factor. Treatment options are dependent upon the cause, yet most causes of infertility are amenable to some form of intervention.

Methods of evaluating infertility include the following:

Female:

- Basal Body Temperature Monitoring (BBT) – The purpose of BBT is to monitor the early morning resting body temperature changes. Women experience a rise in body temperature after ovulation. Daily monitoring can be used to document that ovulation has occurred.
- Ovulation Prediction – Luteinizing hormone (LH) is the hormone that triggers the release of the egg from the follicle. Ovulation prediction kits can be used to time intercourse. It has largely replaced BBT monitoring.
- Estradiol – Estradiol is released by the developing follicle. As more follicles develop, estradiol levels increase. Low levels of estradiol may indicate that the follicle does not contain a healthy egg.
- Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) Assay – FSH is a hormone responsible for the development of the egg. FSH is measured on day 3 of the menstrual cycle. An elevated FSH is associated with a low chance of pregnancy.
- Progesterone – Progesterone is a female hormone produced after ovulation. Blood is drawn 4-9 days after predicted ovulation to determine if ovulation has occurred.
- Laparoscopy – Laparoscopy is a surgical outpatient procedure that allows the physician to diagnose and treat pelvic disorders, such as endometriosis. The physician can determine if tubes are open, scarring is present, or if there are uterine abnormalities.

Male:

- Semen Analysis – The semen analysis is one of the first tests ordered in the infertility evaluation. A sperm sample is obtained to determine the concentration, the shape and the ability of the sperm to swim in straight lines.
- Sperm Antibodies – These antibodies incapacitate the sperm before it can pass through the cervix and reach the egg, or they may impair fertilization of the egg.