



Europe
IVF

Psychological support during IVF

Part of the Treatment Guide series of brochures



Attention:

The information provided in this brochure should not be used as a substitute for information or advice provided by a doctor. Your doctor can help you choose the best option for you.

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Introduction

The decision to have a family can be one of the most exciting but also most challenging times of your life. Each journey to parenthood is unique and brings with it emotional, physical and psychological challenges.

Infertility is a frequent reason for not being able to have biological children, but it's not the only one. Unlike other reasons for not having children, which can be predictable, infertility often comes unexpectedly when a couple decides to have children. We should therefore use the term 'involuntary childlessness'; this refers to situations in which individuals or couples are unable to have biological children despite their desire and efforts. Involuntary childlessness better describes the broad psychosocial aspect of this situation.

Psychosocial impacts of infertility treatment

The psychosocial aspect of infertility can be extremely difficult and painful for individuals and couples alike. This condition is associated with deep emotional challenges that affect all aspects of life.

Psychological support and counselling are crucial in infertility. Therapy and counselling services can provide relief and give you tools to manage the stress and anxiety often associated with infertility. Talking about your feelings with a professional can be very liberating and help you cope

better with the emotional burden. Support in relationships is also essential. Couples therapy can help couples communicate better and face difficulties together, which can strengthen their relationship and offer emotional relief. Joining support groups can offer a sense of belonging and a chance to share experiences with people going through similar issues. This support can be very comforting and empowering, as it provides space for open sharing and mutual understanding.

Emotional impacts

- ✓ **Self-esteem and identity**
Infertility can affect self-esteem and personal identity. It can make you feel inferior or incomplete, which can have a serious impact on self-esteem.
- ✓ **Deep sadness and loss**
For many people, infertility is associated with deep sadness and a sense of loss. Failing to conceive can make them feel like their dreams of parenthood will never come true, which is heartbreaking.
- ✓ **Stress and anxiety**
The constant pressure and uncertainty associated with infertility can lead to chronic stress and anxiety. Thoughts of the future and fear of failure can be overwhelming.

Social impacts

- ✓ **Isolation and loneliness**
Infertility can lead to social isolation. People may avoid social events where children or pregnant women are present, which can lead to feelings of loneliness.
- ✓ **Social stigma and lack of understanding**
In many societies, infertility is still a taboo. People may experience a lack of understanding or insensitive comments from family and friends, which can intensify their pain.
- ✓ **Pressure and expectation**
The social pressure to have children can be overwhelming. Expectations from family and society can increase feelings of failure and guilt.

The effect of treatment on relationships and mental health

Couples that turn to IVF to help them achieve their dream of having a child are usually already mentally exhausted from months or even years of unsuccessful attempts; this is intensified by the stress and anxiety associated with the process and result of IVF, as well as the effect of hormonal changes that will inevitably affect a woman's mental state. Furthermore, if it is concluded that one of the partners is infertile, it is very likely that each partner will, at subconsciously, blame the other.

Assisted reproduction can affect the mental state of partners even after the treatment ends, whether it is a success or failure. Childless women often describe the treatment as a positive experience that increased their self-esteem, even if they

failed to conceive. Women who conceive through assisted reproduction tend to be more anxious during pregnancy and more likely to worry about the health of the foetus.

Men experience more stress and feel more responsible for the infertility. They often avoid sharing their feelings and suffer from low self-esteem. Throughout the process of assisted reproduction, men tend to be onlookers while the women take charge. It is important to try not to sideline men in the whole process.

Half of women consider infertility treatment to be the most stressful event they experienced. Long-term unsuccessful treatment also has a significant effect on mental health.





The importance of counselling in IVF

When you decide to undergo infertility treatment and assisted reproduction (IVF), psychotherapeutic counselling is a key tool that can give you support and help you manage the emotional and psychological challenges associated with the process. Here are some situations that our counsellor can help you with:

- **Reducing stress and anxiety**

Stress and anxiety are common reactions to an infertility diagnosis and assisted reproduction treatment. We know this process can be very stressful. Psychotherapy can help you manage these feelings and improve your overall mental health. Reducing stress can also positively affect hormonal balance and general physical health, which is important for a successful pregnancy.

- **Strengthened emotional support**

Infertility treatment can be emotionally draining. Psychotherapy can give you with a safe space to openly express your emotions such as sadness, frustration, anger and hopelessness. We will help you strengthen your emotional resilience and better cope with challenging moments.

- **Improved communication between partners**

IVF can really put your partnership to the test. Psychotherapy can help you improve communication and understanding between you and your partner. An open dialogue about your feelings, fears and expectations can strengthen your relationship and improve mutual support during treatment. Better communication can also reduce tensions and conflict that can arise from the stress of infertility.

- **Managing side effects**

Drugs and hormone therapies used in assisted reproduction can have psychological side effects such as mood swings, anxiety and depression. Psychotherapy can help you better manage these side effects and provide strategies to minimise them, improving your overall quality of life.

- **Support in your decisions**

The infertility treatment process involves many decisions that can be stressful and emotionally challenging. Psychotherapy can support you in your decisions about different treatment options, including ethical issues and the choice between using your own or donated gametes.

- **Boost in self-esteem and confidence**

Infertility can have a negative impact on your self-esteem and confidence. Psychotherapy can help you improve these aspects by giving you the tools to cope with infertility and to find meaning and value outside of parenthood.

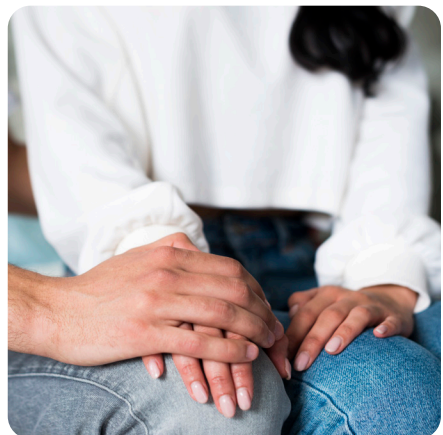
- **Help with accepting and dealing with failure**

Failed fertility treatment can be devastating. Psychotherapy can support you in processing and accepting failure and help you find alternative paths to parenthood, such as adoption, or coming to terms with the possibility of childlessness.

- **Support in navigating social and cultural pressures**

Infertility and assisted reproduction can be fraught with social and cultural pressures. Psychotherapy can help you manage pressure from family, friends and society, and support you in finding your own approach to parenthood and treatment.

Psychotherapy and counselling are an integral part of a holistic approach to infertility treatment and assisted reproduction; they provide emotional and psychological support that can significantly improve the overall quality of your life and your chances of a successful pregnancy. It is crucial to pay attention to both your physical and mental needs during treatment in order to improve your mental health and the chances of success.





How to manage the challenges of IVF

IVF (in vitro fertilisation) is often a challenging period full of emotions, stress and uncertainty. Here are some strategies and tips for managing this emotionally challenging time:

- **Trust your doctor and the chosen treatment method**

Stay in contact with your doctor and inform him of any changes in your health; together you can tailor your treatment to best suit your needs.

Have confidence in your treatment team; knowing you are in good hands can greatly reduce anxiety.

- **Educate yourself**

When facing the unknown, it can seem like you are lost in a sea of uncertainty. Being informed can give you a sense of control. Read books, articles and consult with doctors. Every bit of knowledge can reduce your anxiety. And don't be afraid to ask your doctors and specialists. Knowing what to expect can calm your fears and give you the peace of mind you need.

● **Talk and share your feelings**

Open communication: Talk to your partner about your feelings, fears, and hopes. Together, you can create a strong support team in which you feel safe and understood.

Support from friends and family: Share your feelings with loved ones if they know about your treatment. It can be challenging, but finding someone to listen and support you can provide major relief.

Group therapy and support groups: Meeting people who are going through the same thing can be very comforting; you won't feel alone in your struggle.

● **Get healthy**

Regular exercise: Exercise is a great way to relieve tension and improve your mood. Find an activity you enjoy and incorporate it into your daily routine.

A healthy diet: A balanced diet can have a positive effect on your body and mind. Focus on foods that strengthen you and give you energy.

Get enough sleep: Quality sleep is key to managing stress and maintaining good mental and physical health.

● **Plan and organize**

Set realistic goals: Break down the treatment process into smaller, manageable steps. Celebrate every little success and be proud of yourself.

Be flexible: Accept that not everything will go according to plan. Be prepared to adapt to changes and unexpected events.

Plan fun events: Planning little enjoyable events can improve your mood and provide something to look forward to.

Pursue your interests: Engage in activities that you enjoy and that bring you joy; this will help you think differently and reduce stress.

● **Ask for help**

Psychotherapy and counselling: Professional help can provide tools to help manage stress and emotions. Sometimes it's best to talk to someone who is neutral and can give you professional guidance.

Relaxation techniques: Yoga, meditation and deep breathing can be great tools to help calm your mind and body. Take a moment every day to relax and recharge.

IVF can be challenging, but with support, education and the right coping strategies, you can get through it. Remember that taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health. Seeking support, communicating with your partner, and professional counselling can go a long way in making your treatment more successful and less stressful.



You can find lots of information adapted to various stages in a couple's journey on our website www.europeivf.com/en.

Are you ready to take the first step?

If you are ready, book your first appointment at our clinic.

Our coordinators can offer you in-person, phone or video appointments.

We are available during normal business hours if you request, at a time that suits your preferences

Book a consultation with one of our leading fertility specialists



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**If you have any questions,
ask us.**



You dream. We care.



**Every day, a woman
treated by us learns
that she is pregnant.**

**The excellent work
of our team makes
one woman happy
every day.**

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