Preparing for Pregnancy

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There comes a time in every couple’s life when they look at one another and say, “Let’s have a baby!”

But making that decision is just the first step. It’s important that couples plan ahead to ensure a healthy pregnancy and help increase fertility.

Before starting to try, couples should meet with their obstetrician/gynecologist to discuss their interest in becoming pregnant. Your doctor will take a family history, check immunity to German measles (which can lead to birth defects), prescribe prenatal vitamins to ensure healthy growth and development, make sure any current medications are safe during pregnancy, screen for genetic diseases such as sickle cell anemia or cystic fibrosis, and assess any medical problems such as diabetes, which could be a concern during pregnancy.

This is the time to discuss anything that could reduce your chance of becoming pregnant, including a history of irregular periods or infection. Age, particularly if a woman is older than 35, could also be a factor. These concerns could signal your doctor to make an immediate referral to a reproductive endocrinologist for infertility testing.

About 10 percent of women have difficulty becoming pregnant or carrying a baby to term. When fertility is normal, couples have a 20 percent chance of conceiving after one month, 50 percent after three months, 75 percent after six months, and 85 to 90 percent after a year. These percentages decrease with advancing maternal age, especially after age 35.

If there are no known factors, and a couple has not become pregnant after a year (after six months if the woman is 35 or older), it is recommended that they visit a reproductive endocrinologist. A reproductive endocrinologist can learn the source of the infertility (whether it is sperm, ovulation or a tubal problem) and provide medications and other treatments, including in vitro fertilization, to help increase the chances of success.

To help increase fertility, men should:

- Avoid use of alcohol
- Stop smoking
- Beware of environmental toxins, such as pesticides
- Treat health problems
In addition, women can:

- Treat stress and anxiety
- Eat a healthy diet and maintain a normal weight
- Exercise, but avoid heavy athletic training

Pregnancy is a magical time, but not being able to conceive can be the most frustrating and heartbreaking experience of a couple’s life together. By preparing and getting help if necessary, couples can help ensure their decision to have a baby becomes a beautiful reality.

For appointments, referrals or more information, please contact MCG Reproductive Medicine and Infertility Associates at (706) 722-4434.