

FACT SHEET FOR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS



CANBERRA
FERTILITY CENTRE

Phone: 02 6282 5458
Email: coordinator@cfc.net.au

This fact sheet is designed to assist friends and family members to understand your needs and support you more effectively.

FACT: There is rarely a quick or simple answer to infertility problems. Assessment and treatment procedures usually take considerable time.

FEELINGS: You can help by not forcing the issue with questions such as “When are you going to have a baby?” The person may not know if they can have a child, much less when it will be. You can help by allowing the person to decide if and when they want to talk about it.

FACT: There is a huge range of factors that can contribute to infertility, and treatments vary accordingly.

FEELINGS: Each couple’s experience of infertility is very real for them and cannot be compared with others as being more or less serious. The wish to have a baby, and the fear that it might not be possible, is of paramount importance. You can help by acknowledging the person/s feelings for what they are, without comparing them with other situations you may know about.

FACT: 90% of infertility has a known medical cause.

FEELINGS: It is not helpful or medically sound to offer advice such as “relax”, “take a holiday”, etc. You can help by not giving misguided, albeit well intended, advice, and by helping to break down the myths that surround fertility difficulties.

FACT: Some people consider infertility to be a private concern. Yet others find comfort in being able to share it with close friends and family members. It is normal for people to feel sad, angry or depressed at times.

FEELINGS: You can help by respecting their need for privacy—or, by offering support if there is a need to talk about it. Be prepared to accept the expression of feelings such as anger, sadness and depression.

FACT: Those experiencing infertility often feel inadequate because they have no control over their reproductive system.

FEELINGS: You can provide support by recognising and helping the person/s to see the strengths, qualities and achievements in other areas of their lives.

FACT: Some people experience fertility problems after having one child. This is devastating and frustrating for those who feel their families are incomplete.

FEELINGS: You can offer support by understanding what this means to them. Avoid comments such as “You’re lucky to have a child at all”.

FACT: Some women experience recurrent miscarriage.

FEELINGS: You can help by understanding the mixed feelings of hope, anxiety, guilt and despair. Do not offer false hope - or be unduly pessimistic. The woman has enough feelings of her own to cope with, and miscarriage always represents a very real loss. Don’t forget, too, that the father has also experienced this loss. He also needs your support and understanding.

Your encouragement, understanding and support for your infertile friend or relative can help to guide them on their long road to resolving their infertility. This support is crucial to their emotional healing. Should you require any further information, please feel free to contact the Nurse Coordinator at Canberra Fertility Centre and if necessary visit and talk to her.