



# DEBUNKING MYTHS ABOUT IVF

Dr Sahil Gupta, Founder & CEO,  
Aveya Fertility and IVF Center

**I**n today's time, infertility is a problem suffered by many, yet addressed by few. Worldwide, there has been a rise in infertility with thousands of married couples fighting against it in the hope of conceiving a child. However, lack of proper understanding of how an IVF procedure works, and how it can help is keeping several couples away from the joy of parenthood.

Couples across the globe are purposely postponing conception for several legit reasons, one of which is undivided career focus. When they finally decide to conceive and fail, they opt for in-vitro fertilization (IVF) overestimating and mistaking it for 100% efficacy. On the other hand, there are couples that shudder with the name IVF and find the medical breakthrough in stark contrast with their belief, ethics and culture. As it happens, it is evident that dozens of cultural myths and misconceptions about IVF account for delay in seeking help or none at all. But what are these myths anyway? Let's look at some.

## **IVF is only for the rich**

IVF is considered as an expensive fertility treatment that costs over ₹1,00,000 in India. It is even higher in the U.S. where one fresh IVF cycle costs more than ₹10,00,000. However, it is not the only assisted fertility option for childless couples. There are several assisted reproductive technology (ART) treatments

that are far more economical, for instance mini-IVF and IVF Lite cost almost half the conventional IVF. The basic procedure of IVF involves only an ovum pickup and an embryo transfer. The cost of the procedure is increased because of expensive injections and drugs. The procedure can be done with one egg also, which reduces the cost. Aveya offers an all-inclusive basic natural IVF cycle for ₹50,000, over 75% down from the average ₹150,000 price tag of existing Indian clinics.

## **IVF is only for females**

IVF is for both males and females, since infertility is equally prevalent in both the genders. Statistics suggest that both males and females account exactly same for infertility, i.e., 50%. Where fertility evaluation involves female reproductive and hormonal assessment, it also analyses semen for sperm motility, morphology and concentration. For male-factor infertility, an IVF technique called intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) is used where sperm lacking motility or normal morphology is injected directly into the egg for fertilization. Over the years, male infertility is emerging as a major reason for couples seeking treatment. The WHO Classification of the normal semen parameter has changed, showing a consistent decline in the number and motility. One of the major breakthroughs of infertility treatment, ICSI is for male-factor infertility.

## **IVF reverses infertility**

It is another misconception. IVF has indeed revolutionized fertility treatment by creating hope for millions of childless couples; however it certainly does not return fecundity, which naturally falls with age. Data shows that fertility potential decreases slightly after age 32 and detrimentally after 38. IVF is an extensive fertility management that involves egg stimulation, retrieval and fertilization outside the body, but it cannot

correct the baseline genetics or the quality of the egg or sperm or the embryo (that is formed by mixing both the gametes) which is influenced by the lifestyle, dietary habits and the stress level of the couple. IVF should be considered as a process of diagnosing what is wrong along with treatment.

## **IVF is 100% successful**

While the success rate of IVF has improved dramatically over the last decade, these are still not 100%. It depends upon the choice of fertility clinic; top fertility clinics boast up to 40% success while others report as low as 10%. In normal, healthy and young couples, chances of natural conception are less than 20% per menstrual cycle. With ART, you have a 35% chance of giving birth if you are younger than 40; 7% if you are 42 and above.

Success depends upon several factors including age, reason for infertility, oocyte (egg) quality, lifestyle, BMI as well as the choice of fertility clinic, to name a few. Smoking and alcohol consumption reduce conception potential.

## **IVF Leads to caesarean births**

The first baby conceived through IVF was born vaginally. However, since couples opting IVF have conceived after expensive treatment and several attempts, majority of them go for elective caesarean birth to minimise the risks.

## **Test tube babies are unhealthy**

While ART has come a long way in reproductive medicine, many of the concerns about the health of the baby are true. Many people believe that test tube babies are born with low birth weight and birth defects, and it may be true. However, ART is still largely unexplored; more research needs to be done to investigate short and long term benefits and risks. Majority of the test tube babies though, live a healthy and normal life.