

# Infertile couples encouraged to look at lifestyle

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A University of Adelaide study has recommended that infertile couples seek advice about their lifestyle before embarking on IVF treatment or other assisted reproductive technology.

Gillian Homan, a fertility nurse specialist and researcher from the University's Robinson Institute, says that while most people link obesity, smoking, drugs and stress to [infertility](#) problems, many infertile couples fail to look at their own lifestyle as a possible obstacle to conceiving.

Ms Homan says couples experiencing infertility should understand the role their own lifestyle can play in helping them to achieve their goal of a healthy baby. These factors should be addressed in collaboration with the latest ART techniques.

The reproductive health researcher surveyed 20 new patients from Adelaide [fertility clinic](#) Repromed to gauge their perception of how lifestyle affects fertility.

While the evidence of the impact of weight on fertility is very strong, only half of the overweight women in this study considered their own weight to be a risk factor for infertility.

"Both obesity and low body weight can cause hormone imbalances and affect ovulation," Ms Homan says. "The time it takes to become pregnant is markedly increased if both partners are obese and the chance of delivering a healthy baby is also less."

Ms Homan says overweight women are also at risk of [pregnancy complications](#) such as miscarriage, gestational diabetes and raised blood pressure.

The other major finding to come out of the study reveals that many women trying to conceive are not following the current recommended guidelines for folic acid supplements.

"A daily supplement of folic acid pre-conceptually and in the first three months of pregnancy has been shown to decrease the risk of [neural tube defects](#) by up to 70%. Many women around the world are reportedly unaware of this fact," Ms Homan says.

The study underlines the importance of good preconception advice and support.

"Any couples contemplating pregnancy would benefit from preconception advice to ensure their lifestyle choices are giving them the best chance of conceiving," she says.

Ms Homan's findings were published in the *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing* this month.

A follow up study to see whether individualised counselling and support leads to healthy [lifestyle](#) changes has shown some encouraging preliminary results, Ms Homan says.

More information: [www.ajan.com.au/](http://www.ajan.com.au/)

Provided by University of Adelaide ([news](#) : [web](#))

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