

3 in 10 women able to conceive naturally after infertility treatment

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Women who have IVF/ICSI infertility treatments have a 29% chance of conceiving naturally within six years of the cessation of treatments. These are the findings of an Internet survey conducted by a group of gynaecologists presented in the journal Human Fertility.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence estimates that one in seven couples in the United Kingdom are affected by infertility, with so-called 'assisted reproductive technologies' (ARTs) such as IVF and ICSI being widely employed. These treatments are emotionally and financially demanding, and not all couples will achieve a baby through these methods.

Research into conception rates after these treatments – whether successful or unsuccessful – has been limited, but the authors hope that their findings will be useful for counselling and reassuring [women](#) about their chances of natural conception after infertility treatment.

The researchers contacted users of an independent fertility website asking members who had received IVF/ICSI treatments to participate in their anonymous survey. From the 403 applicable responses (from a total of 484 responses), they found that of the 96 respondents who did not conceive through the course of the treatments, 34 subsequently conceived, leading to 30 live births. Of the 307 who conceived during the treatments, 84 also conceived post-treatment.

Lead author Samuel Marcus said "regardless of the outcome of IVF and

ICSI treatments – whether the patients conceived or not – there is about a 30% likelihood of conceiving over a 6 year period."

The authors do acknowledge some limitations in their paper, specifically that it relied on self-reporting, and that a selection bias may have been caused by pregnant couples being more willing to respond than disappointed couples.

In the study, the authors found that 87% of the spontaneous conceptions occurred within two years of finishing the infertility treatments, and over the six-year period following treatments 22% delivered a live baby. Whilst many couples may see treatments as IVF as a 'last resort' the researchers hope that their findings may offer hope to those in this unfortunate position.

Professor Allan Pacey, Editor in Chief of Human Fertility said "This is really useful information that doctors can use to counsel patients about their chances of pregnancy after undergoing assisted conception. It certainly suggests that there remains a reasonable chance of spontaneous pregnancy after IVF or ICSI has been attempted."

More information: Adam P. Marcus et al. Spontaneous pregnancies following discontinuation of IVF/ICSI treatment: an internet-based survey, *Human Fertility* (2016). [DOI: 10.1080/14647273.2016.1196296](https://doi.org/10.1080/14647273.2016.1196296)

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