

# Infertility: An Overview

## *What is infertility?*

For the average couple there is approximately a 30% chance that conception will occur during any single perfect month; 80 to 90% of couples trying to get pregnant will thus succeed within 1 year. But 1 out of every 6 couples will have trouble conceiving and/or carrying a child to term. **Infertility is defined as the failure to get pregnant after 1 year of unprotected, well-timed sexual intercourse.** Research has found that about 40% of infertility is caused by female factors, 40% by male factors, and 25% by a combination of both.

## *What causes infertility?*

Ovulation most frequently occurs about 14 days before menstruation begins. An egg is released from the ovary and is swept into a fallopian tube where fertilization occurs. 2 to 3 days later the fertilized egg implants in the lining of the uterus. Any factor that impedes this process can prevent conception. Common causes of infertility include hormonal problems, blocked or damaged fallopian tubes, endometriosis and sperm of insufficient quantity or quality.

## *What tests are performed?*

Diagnostic tests are prescribed based on your medical history, a physical examination and the results of any previous testing and/or treatment. These could include a semen analysis, blood workup, a pelvic ultrasound and an X-ray study to evaluate the uterus and fallopian tubes. The results constitute the **infertility work-up**, which the doctor uses to diagnose and treat your infertility.

## *What is the next step?*

You and your partner will meet with your doctor to discuss the results of the work-up. Use the Consultation Notes to write down your questions and concerns in advance. Take notes during the meeting including the test results, diagnosis and treatment plan. Don't be afraid to ask the doctor for clarification if you are unsure what he or she is saying. Schedule a follow-up consultation if you have completed the prescribed treatment plan without success or if you have questions about any phase of the treatment.