In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)

In vitro fertilization (IVF) is also called Assisted Reproductive Technologies. Through laparoscopy (minor surgery), eggs are removed from the ovaries. In the lab, the male's sperm and the woman's egg are combined. The resulting embryos are inserted into the uterus through the cervix in hopes of a pregnancy. Other forms of IVF are gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT) and zygote intrafallopian transfer (ZIFT).

Candidates for IVF include:

- Infertile couples.
- Women who underwent premature menopause/ovarian failure.
- Women who had both ovaries removed.
- Women who have blocked fallopian tubes.

The ideal ages for IVF is 32 years old or younger. There is no age limit as a candidate for IVF, but it is recommended not to do IVF during or after menopause. IVF is expensive, a time commitment and a consuming process that should be discussed before doing IVF.

BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

Many tests, treatments and exams are done on the woman and sperm donor. These include:

- A complete history, physical exam and a Pap test.
- A complete history and physical exam of the sperm donor.
- The sperm is analyzed (*semenalysis*) to see if they are normal, there are enough present to fertilize the egg and they act normally after having sexual intercourse (post coital examination of the sperm).
- Check for sexually transmitted disease or hepatitis in either person.
- Hormone tests and ovulation testing.
- Ultrasound of the pelvic organs.
- X-ray of the uterus to make sure the uterus and fallopian tubes are normal after dye inserted into the uterus (*hysterosalpingogram*).
- History and testing both the woman and sperm donor for genetic problems in them or their family.
- A laparoscopy (for some women) to be sure there are no pelvic diseases that may be a problem during IVF. Women with certain disease or illness may not be a candidate for IVF.
- Special hormone treatment will be given to you to stimulate the ovaries to produce many eggs. This is called *hyperstimulation of the ovaries*.

LET YOUR CAREGIVER KNOW ABOUT:

- Any medical or genetic problems with you or your family.
- The medications you are taking. These include over-the-counter, prescription, herbal, eye drops and creams.
- Any excessive alcohol drinking, smoking or taking illegal drugs.
- Past problems with anesthesia.
- Past surgery and pregnancies.
- Any allergies to medications.

RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS

- Bleeding and infection.
- Anesthesia problems.
- The procedure not working.
- Having a multiple pregnancy (2 or more).
- There is a higher incidence of early delivery, even with a single pregnancy.
- A higher incidence of pregnancy in the tube with ZIFT and GIFT that will require medical treatment or surgery.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE:

- You may have to continue lying down for an hour or more before going home.
- If you had ZIFT or GIFT that requires a laparoscopy, you will be asked to remain at the surgical center or hospital until your vital signs are stable and can safely be discharged. Someone needs to drive you home after having a laparoscopy.

- You will continue to take hormone therapy for about three months or as told by your caregiver.
- Resume your normal diet and activities.
- If you become pregnant, begin routine prenatal care unless you have a high risk pregnancy that may require more testing and prenatal visits.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Follow the advice and recommendations of your caregiver.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- If you become pregnant, keep all of your prenatal appointments and testing as directed by your caregiver.
- If you had ZIFT or GIFT with a laparoscopy, rest and decrease your activities for a couple of days.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop abnormal vaginal discharge.
- You develop a rash.
- You are having problems with your medications.
- You become lightheaded or feel faint.
- You had a laparoscopy and need a prescription for pain medication.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop vaginal bleeding.
- You develop abdominal pain.
- You develop a temperature of 100º F (37.8º C) or higher.
- You pass out.
- You have pus or bleeding from the laparoscopy incisions.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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