

Facts You May Not Know About Female Infertility

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Infertility is extremely prevalent in our society. It affects 10%-15% – or more than one in ten – of all U.S. couples. Women are the reason for 30%-40% of these cases.

Many women, however, are not aware that most causes of female infertility can be successfully treated without the services of infertility specialists or assisted reproductive technologies (such as in vitro fertilization or IVF) – all of which are extremely costly, rarely covered by health insurance, highly stressful and time-consuming. In fact, the only identifiable causes of female infertility that warrant the time and expense of such treatment are irreversibly blocked, damaged or absent Fallopian tubes.

Many women also do not know that there are quick and virtually painless outpatient surgical options available for correcting the most common gynecological conditions that can cause infertility, including endometriosis, uterine fibroids and pelvic adhesions. These minimally invasive procedures – when performed by ob/gyns trained in laparoscopic and other highly advanced surgical techniques – require little to no downtime, plus are virtually always covered by insurance.

Also not widely known are the many cases of “unexplained infertility” in women who actually have endometriosis. All too often, these women are referred for IVF, which costs \$7,000-\$12,000 per cycle and is not covered by insurance – when simple laparoscopic excision of endometriosis could restore their fertility for half that, and *is* covered by insurance.

Furthermore, laparoscopic surgery can also restore fertility in women whose Fallopian tubes are “tied.” While this minimally invasive procedure (called tubal ligation reversal) is not typically covered by health plans, it also costs about half that of IVF. Plus, unlike the latter, it can enable women to become pregnant more than once with just one treatment. When performed by gynecologists who specialize in advanced laparoscopic surgery, this procedure also can be true outpatient – requiring no hospitalization and enabling an almost immediate recovery.

Hormonal and thyroid imbalances that prevent regular ovulation and full-term pregnancy also are the causes of many cases of female infertility. Women should know that ob/gyns use the same medical tests and therapy that infertility specialists use to diagnose and treat these disorders.

The bottom line is that women who have had problems conceiving should not rush down the infertility-specialist avenue for diagnostic testing, medical treatment, or surgery. Ob/gyns who specialize in advanced laparoscopic surgery can save them an enormous amount of time, angst and money in bringing forth a healthy pregnancy and birth.

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Dr. Ribot is the managing partner of Cartersville Ob/Gyn Associates, and the founder/medical director of the Georgia Advanced Surgery Center for Women – Georgia’s only fully accredited outpatient surgical facility for performing all major and minor gynecological procedures, including minimally invasive fertility-promoting surgeries. He and his partner physician-surgeon, Dr. Malcolm Barfield, are the only surgeons in Georgia performing laparoscopic tubal ligation reversal in a true outpatient setting.