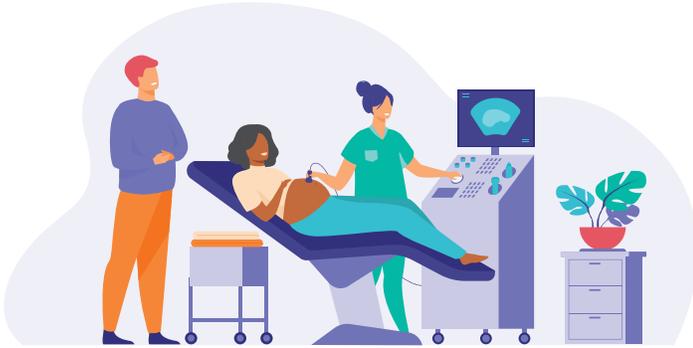


NAVIGATING YOUR FERTILITY CARE



FERTILITY CARE PROVIDERS

Many women start their fertility journey with their current women's health or primary care provider. While your primary provider is good place to begin, your fertility care may benefit from additional health care professionals with subspecialty expertise.

Primary Care Providers:

- **Family Physicians** can provide general women's health care and help monitor family planning progress with their patients.
- **Obstetricians/Gynecologists (OB/GYN)** specialize in female reproductive health and provide women's health care during pre-conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and immediately after delivery.
- **Nurse practitioners** can specialize in obstetrics and gynecology (OGNP) and provide women's health services.
- **Midwives** are trained to help healthy women during labor and delivery, as well as prenatal and postpartum support.

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What is a fertility specialist? Not all fertility specialists have the same education, training, and clinical practice expertise. It's important to research your options and understand their experience and skills to ensure which fertility specialist would be a good fit for you and your care needs.

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Specialized Fertility Care Providers:

- **Reproductive endocrinologists** are OB/GYNs with fellowship training and board certification in reproductive endocrinology and infertility (REI). An REI has advanced knowledge to help diagnose, treat, and overcome infertility challenges in both men and women.
- **Reproductive urologists or andrologists** specialize in addressing fertility issues in men.

Other members of your multidisciplinary care team may include:

- **Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)** providers for alternative therapies (e.g., acupuncture).
- **Interventional radiologist** for certain minimally invasive procedures (e.g., hysterosalpingography or "tubal flushing") to diagnose and treat reproductive tract blockages that can impact fertility.
- **Mental health professional** for emotional health, sexual health, behavioral therapy, and coping skills.
- **Nutritionist or dietitian** for nutritional counseling and health.

Fertility care is not just about getting pregnant, but also about having a healthy pregnancy, labor, and delivery for both mom and baby.

SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Patient-centered health care often involves providers and patients working together to make decisions about tests and treatments throughout their health care journey. You should feel comfortable and empowered to ask as many questions as needed to be confident in your health care provider and fertility care plan. Talk to your provider early and often about any concerns you may have.

What does shared decision-making look like?

- Understanding the available treatment options and their risks and benefits
- Evaluating your options, based on your short and long-term goals and values
- Empowerment to communicate openly with your provider
- Feeling prepared to make informed decisions about your care, in collaboration with your provider
- Giving your **informed consent** before implementation of any procedure or treatment

Informed consent is a process of communication and education to get patient permission for care, treatment, or services. Consent is typically given by signing forms that explain key medical and legal implications of the care services to be rendered.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR FERTILITY CARE PROVIDER

- What process will you use to diagnose potential fertility issues in me or my partner?
- Do I have any health conditions that increase my risk of infertility?
- What is your experience with treating infertility?
- Is there a particular health care provider or fertility specialist that I should add to my care team?
- What are my treatment options? What are the risks, benefits, and success rates of each?
- How long should I wait to expect results? How often should I schedule follow-up visits?
- If you recommend performing a surgical procedure, how many have you performed in the past?
- If I do get pregnant, what happens next?
- What resources or programs can you recommend to help finance my care?
- Can you share some resources to learn more about planning a family and infertility?



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When meeting a new provider, share your goals for treatment and history of prior care early on. Do not be afraid to advocate for yourself and any concerns related to your age, faith, culture, sexual orientation, or other personal preferences. If you want another perspective on your diagnosis and/or treatment options, consider seeking a second opinion.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **American Society for Reproductive Medicine: Find A Health Professional**
- **Johns Hopkins University: Fertility Clinic Finder**
- **Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology: Find an IVF Clinic**

References

Elwyn G, Frosch D, Thomson R, et al. Shared Decision Making: A Model for Clinical Practice. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2012;27(10):1361–1367.

What's an Infertility Specialist? RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association. <https://resolve.org/infertility-101/infertility-faq/whats-an-infertility-specialist/>. Accessed 2 Dec 2021.