



FERTILITY AND PREGNANCY PLANNING AMIDST COVID-19

Many leading organizations in the field of obstetrics and infertility worldwide including ASRM, CDC and Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, recommend that women may proceed with fertility treatments as well as vaccination safely. About 90,000 pregnant women have been vaccinated so far in the United States, and reassuringly, no reports of disproportionate reactions have been noted.

Women's health organizations in India and FOGSI (federation of obstetricians and gynaecologist's society), suggest the same. Couples undergoing or planning fertility treatments such as IVF, IUI, or egg freezing need not postpone their treatments, fearing covid or even post-vaccination. Hormone injections, sedation, or short anaesthesia used at times during IVF does not cause any adverse effects in healthy women. However, studies have shown that any viral infections causing high fever will reduce the number of oocytes obtained in that IVF cycle. Also, high fever and unstable health conditions would lead to the cancellation of the fertility treatment cycle in the interest of the woman's safety becoming a priority.

PRIORITISING SAFETY AND HYGIENE

Hegde Fertility, is working with full COVID precaution while following all disinfection and testing protocols.

Fertility specialists worldwide advise women planning treatments to take all common self-precautions irrespective of vaccination including:

- Wearing the mask at all times
- Maintaining physical distance
- Avoiding touching knobs, lift buttons, and such potentially infectious surfaces
- Avoiding unnecessary outings, travel or gatherings
- Avoiding exposure to infected family members or friends
- Following proper cleaning and disinfection practices at home

Ideally, family members must also follow the same care as treatment-seeking women and practice adequate care

even after vaccination. Unfortunately, new strains are cropping up around the world, and it's not over till it's over.

The same precautions apply to women once they are pregnant as well, since the effect coronavirus can have on pregnancy and the baby is still uncertain. What is known is that affected and sick women are more likely to deliver prematurely. No problems have been linked to babies born after COVID-19 infection in pregnant women so far.

Although parenthood is one of the most cherished experiences life has to offer, today's fast paced life with increased stress, anxiety and depression has ensured an increase in infertility. Lifestyle choices such as diet, exercise, and sleep, help in maintaining good general health. As we uphold 21st June as Yoga Day, it is time to return to our roots and boost our overall wellbeing with Yoga.

YOGA TO ENHANCE FERTILITY

Yoga poses or asanas are said to be an effective form of relaxation with stress relieving benefits. In addition to boosting spirits and encouraging a positive outlook, Yoga is said to improve the fertility rate and

chances of conceiving by stimulating the ovaries and uterus, encouraging blood flow and supply to reproductive organs, and strengthening and stretching the body.

VACCINATION DURING PREGNANCY

Pregnant women in various countries have been vaccinated with the locally available vaccines without any side effects reported so far.

None of the available vaccines against COVID-19, contain live viruses that are not recommended in pregnancy. The available vaccines are either mRNA vaccines or viral vector vaccines that only generate an immune response. As an analogy, some of them are like the Ebola vaccine, which has been already used in pregnant women and proven safe.

After vaccination, possible side effects could include allergic reactions, local infections, and minor/ rarely significant side effects such as blood clot formation, which are individual specific and can cause problems at times. However, even then, the observed incidence is relatively low, less than one thousand per all the 100 million doses given so far in India.

There is a live virus vaccine being studied – the A50-18- but not yet approved or available. However, this would be unsuitable for pregnant women, as are all live vaccines, so we need not concern ourselves at this point.

For the general population, no vaccine is better or superior or safe at this point, and the proclamation is – "the available vaccine is the recommended one."

India does not yet have any recommendations addressing vaccination against COVID-19 in pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and children. This status is not permanent – it is a safety precaution and may change anytime with the availability of new data, since mutant strains of the virus do not behave the same way.

They may affect hitherto unaffected age groups and populations. Hence, we cannot rely on past data and



assume that pregnant women and children would always be safe from this deadly infection. However, immunising a large population quickly will confer herd immunity, reduce healthcare burden, avoid surprises, and third and fourth waves.

FOGSI has released a position statement clarifying vaccination safety in pregnant women. However, the health ministry's guidance is awaited as the fact remains that there is no data today on the safety of immunization in this group of women with the available vaccines.

Vaccination against COVID-19 has been linked to a significant reduction in severe infection and mortality in the general population. And it appears pretty safe.

The experts at Hegde Fertility suggest couples to talk to their fertility specialist for updated advice and recommendations regarding vaccination guidelines and proceed with the time and mass vaccination program. Hopefully, things would settle down, and life would go back to a new normal by the end of this year.

Hegde Fertility, has gone the extra mile to ensure the safety of patients. The management takes pride in ensuring all branches are Covid Free Areas through the following measures:

- All staff are always mandated to wear N-95 masks
- Air purifiers & Corona guard installed for all extended wait areas
- Protocols are set to ensure suitable social distancing measures
- Seamless Teleconsultation & chat facility to ensure fewer visits to the centre
- All branches are regularly sanitised
- The entire team is vaccinated

All patients are requested to wear a well-fitting masks at all times and sanitize hands regularly. Stay safe. Stay blessed!

(Readers are advised to take further advice from their doctors prior to COVID-19 vaccination)

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