



Lifestyle  
Changes for

**IVF SUCCESS**

# Imprint

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By Victory A.R.T. Laboratory Phils, Inc.

This eBook was created by <http://www.ivfvictoryphilippines.com/> in hopes of helping bring into light infertility questions and bring solutions for many couples and / individuals having a hard time conceiving.

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**Victory A.R.T. Laboratory Phils, Inc.** is part of the Hong Kong based Victory Group of A.R.T. Laboratories and is the pioneer IVF laboratory here in the Philippines. Established in and spearheaded by **Dr. Gregorio Pastorfide**, a re-knowned and internationally acclaimed OB-GYN, Victory continues to assist and provide infertility solutions using state-of-the-art equipment and an ever-growing and adapting medical team.

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We thank you everyone who visited our website for information regarding IVF. We have come a long way in providing articles to hopefully aid and support everyone thinking of undergoing the process.

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# How Sleep Deprivation causes Infertility



Couples who are trying to conceive get plenty of advice: from eating healthy food, to getting plenty of exercise, staying active, and even reducing levels of unwanted or unnecessary stress. Quite often, however, many health professionals neglect to advise their patients to get enough sleep. Despite its value as not only a means of rest, but also a window of opportunity for biological functions to promote a healthy physiological balance, sleep is consistently overlooked for its merits.

In the Philippines, sleep deprivation is prevalent, with a number of professionals leading a lifestyle incompatible with adequate rest. Men and women in this country risk their overall health as well, as

they develop unhealthy habits that are counter-productive to their general wellbeing, but are instead a misguided attempt to function in the real world.

Adequate sleep intervals allow for the release of hormones that are beneficial to the body, especially for processes involved with immune system function. Sleep modulates the hypothalamus in both the release and inhibition of factors that trigger the synthesis or release of hormones, influencing the function of the pituitary gland.

For example, growth hormone, responsible for the promotion of healing injured tissue and stimulating growth is released during sleep; whereas corticotropin-releasing hormone, which is released during stress, is inhibited. Conversely, the lack of sleep compromises



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the body's immune system, increases stress, impairs a healthy metabolism, and undermines overall general health.

The following is a list of some side effects of sleep deprivation:

- Impaired cognition and decision-making, leading to accidents
- Emotional lability, due to low serotonin and increased cortisol
- Decreased fertility and libido
- Abnormal hormone secretion
- Impaired immune system function and slow healing
- Increased risk of developing chronic illness (metabolic syndrome, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes)

Reproductive health for both men and women is dependent on healthy, consistent sleep patterns. Most healthcare professionals encourage adults to get from seven to nine hours of sleep every night. Since hormones, which are strongly modulated by sleep and circadian rhythms, are inextricably linked to the human reproductive and immune systems, sleep deprivation can lead to fertility problems.

For men, sperm counts have been seen to decrease up to several months after an episode of illness, such as the common cold. Additionally, men are more prone to erectile dysfunction when they are deprived of sleep. Women, on the other hand, experience decreased vaginal lubrication. Without adequate sleep, men and women have a lower sex drive, which not only reduces the number of attempts to conceive, but also diminishes the quality of their relationship.

Women undergoing IVF cycles are strongly encouraged to get enough sleep, especially since the hormones and other medical treatments must be correctly synthesized, utilized and metabolized by the body. Since IVF success is dependent on the interactions of many hormones, there is little room for compromise when it comes to getting enough sleep.



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# How Weight Impacts IVF



It is a universal fact that maintaining a normal, healthy body composition is important to fertility, since being overly obese or overly thin can adversely affect a woman's chances of getting pregnant. Women or couples with difficulty conceiving may decide to attempt a cycle of in-vitro fertilization, which may be complicated by health issues such as being overweight. A healthy body-mass index (BMI) and IVF success are positively correlated; thus maintaining a normal BMI can only increase your chances at success during the first cycle of IVF.

Body mass index is calculated by taking your weight in kilograms and dividing it by your height squared in meters. A normal BMI should fall between 18.5 and 24.9 kg/sqm.

Women who are obese need significantly larger doses of injections for superovulation to occur. Their egg production is also much lower as compared to women whose BMI is normal. This leads to a reduced chance of pregnancy. More importantly, there is a greater risk of miscarriage for obese women as compared to women whose BMI falls within the normal range.

Women who are underweight also tend to produce fewer eggs than their normal counterparts. They too have an elevated risk of miscarriage, according to several studies comparing reproductive success between women of varying BMI.

Before even starting a cycle of in-vitro fertilization, it is important for the prospective patient to bring her body weight to an optimum level. This can be achieved by proper diet, exercise, and

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feasible lifestyle modifications. Any change in the right direction (i.e. toward achieving a normal body composition) can decrease infertility. In the Philippines, this is often associated with eating healthier non-processed and nutritious food, quitting smoking, or eliminating alcohol intake.

Exercise can also make weight management easier, regardless of whether your BMI is lower or higher than normal. Getting enough exercise has beneficial effects on mood, reducing stress, and improving blood circulation. Women who are underweight can make similar lifestyle changes as obese women, and expect similar progress. Many women find that committing to an IVF cycle provides enough motivation for optimizing their body weight.

It is important to be careful about weight management, since rapid change in your weight can affect your IVF cycles adversely. If your weight or BMI is outside the normal range, it is important to plan these changes carefully and to do it gradually and slowly.

Follow a sensible diet plan and exercise without doing strenuous activities. Avoid following any fad diets or any practices that require you to starve yourself.

Proper nutrition and a healthy lifestyle make a very successful combination for optimal reproductive success.



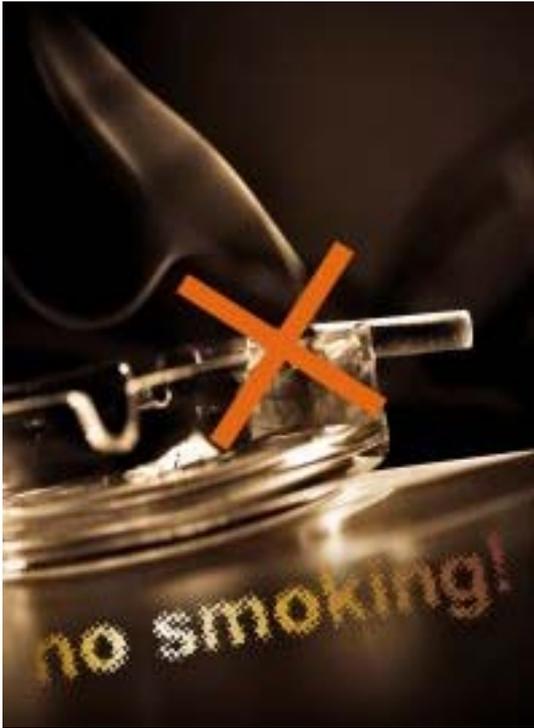
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# Effects of Smoking on IVF



Smoking has been conclusively identified and documented as detrimental to pregnant women. It comes as no surprise that women seeking to achieve pregnancy through in-vitro fertilization are also similarly affected.

Since smoking has already been linked to an increased incidence of premature ovarian failure as well as early menopause, ovarian function in IVF cycles performed on smoking women has fallen under heavy scrutiny. According to several studies, women undergoing IVF treatment are less successful if they smoke during the course of treatment. These studies have demonstrated that the smoking ad-

versely affects a woman's reproductive system, causing the organs to age prematurely.

A Dutch infertility study in 2005 found that the overall effect of smoking two or more cigarettes per day for one year reduced a woman's chance of carrying a IVF pregnancy to term by 28%. This reduced success rate is illustrative of the difference between women of 20 and 30 years of age. For women who smoke, they might as well be ten years older than they really are.

In the study, women with unexplained infertility who were smokers were found to have a 13.4% success rate in carrying their pregnancies to term, as compared to 20.7% for non-smokers. Moreover, the miscarriage rate in the study was found to be 21.4% for smokers, versus 16.4% for their non-smoking cohorts.

A promotional graphic for Victory A.R.T. Laboratory Philippines, Inc. The graphic is styled to look like a document with a paperclip in the top right corner. It contains the text: "Want to experience our personalized care? We offer **FREE consultation** with our Embryologist." Below this text are two options: a blue button that says "Click here" and the word "OR" in large, bold, black letters. Below "OR" is another blue button that says "CALL 8842290 - 92". To the left of the "CALL" button is a small icon of a telephone handset. In the top right corner, there is a small circular logo with a sun-like symbol inside.

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The local setting has seen many benefits from advances in medical science, as increased IVF success among Filipinos proves to be encouraging. However, with smoking such a prevalent health issue among couples of reproductive age, it is important that they are aware of these inconvenient truths.

Cadmium, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, nicotine and its metabolites interact with germ cells themselves, adversely affecting their survival. Cigarette smoke has also been shown to have an anti-estrogenic effect, and the constituents of tobacco may affect the ovaries' ability to synthesize hormones necessary to maintain pregnancy and carry a fetus to term.

In-vitro studies have investigated the effects of tobacco on the cumulus-oocyte complex and

oocyte maturation, showing that nicotine affects the cell's ability to divide normally. Tobacco smoke also adversely affects the early development of embryos, leading to embryo death even before the blastocyst stage.

Smokers also produce oocytes with thickened zona pellucida. The thickness of this membrane is one of the major factors affecting embryonic hatching ability, implantation, and overall pregnancy success rates.

Smoking affects all aspects of health, and cases of infertility in the Philippines are no exception. It is of utmost importance that women and couples seeking IVF treatment are aware of how they can improve their chances of becoming pregnant by making the right decisions.



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# A Guy's Guide to IVF



Conception problems are mostly blamed on women, mostly due to misinformation and an incomplete understanding of the factors involved in a couple's attempt to conceive a child. But is it really true? Do women really deserve this much blame for such difficulty?

## **MEN HAVE TO DO THEIR PART AS WELL**

Studies have shown that men have as much to do with infertility as women. About one-third of failed pregnancies can be attributed to problems the male partner has, while another third can be traced from the female. Indefinite and unknown causes make up the last third.

This is a clear indication that men must explore possible causes that lead to their partner's inability to conceive. The most common stems from issues involving sperm count.

## **KEEPING YOUR SPERM HEALTHY**

Sperm count and motility are as important as the health of the eggs within the uterus of a woman. If a couple plans on undergoing In Vitro Fertilization or IVF, it is truly essential that the proper count and motility be met. This is to ensure that the success rate of the process is maximized, producing results without any trouble at all.

## **IVF AND MEN**

What does it take for men to get the job done? Here are some tips on how you can take care of your reproductive health and have fruitful results when undergoing IVF.

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### Avoid vices and always eat right

Through extensive research, it has been found out that smoking and drinking are linked to infertility problems among men. Undergoing IVF means that you have to be disciplined as well. Avoid vices for the process to actually work.

It is also important that you eat right. A daily diet of unhealthy foods rich in preservatives is not good for your reproductive health. Prepare healthy meals by grilling your meat and having a healthy serving of fruits and vegetables on your plate. Also, always have enough Vitamin C in your diet. Studies have suggested that this can help increase one's sperm count.

### Sleep right

Leptin is a substance that is essential for weight reduction. It also happens to be a very important element during the process of fertility. Lack of sleep can result in low levels of Leptin in the body. With most men likely to be lacking in the right amount of sleep, this has to be considered.

### Wear supporters

Do you often engage in sports? More often than not, too much strenuous activity can affect your reproductive system in a negative way. Always have protection. In this case, proper support equipment will do.

Men truly have as much of an obligation as women do when it comes to IVF. It's mostly about being disciplined and keeping yourself in top shape for the process to actually take place. For the sake of your child-to-be, always remember to do the right things.



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# What Man Can Do to Improve Sperm Quality

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In order for a couple to conceive, the male partner must have at least 40 million sperm per ejaculate. Thus, the sperm count plays a vital role in diagnosing male infertility. Statistics show that for more than 40% of couples struggling to have children, the reason was linked to male infertility, and not solely a problem with the female partner.

Decreased sperm production can be a temporary problem, related to causes such as extreme heat exposure, riding a bicycle for long hours, ill-fitting briefs, lack of sleep, emotional stress, and performance anxiety. Fortunately, these patients can benefit from some lifestyle changes that can increase their sperm count and their partners' chances of getting pregnant.

Over six percent of males between ages 15 and 50 years have chronic infertility, which in turn is caused by a wide range of problems. One such problem is varicocele, an enlargement of the network of veins in the scrotum. Low sperm count can be due to certain lifestyle choices and patterns, such as wearing tight underwear, staying in a sauna or Jacuzzi for prolonged periods of time, or even stress.

Here in the Philippines, semen examination is available at many health centers, wellness clinics, and fertility clinics. These centers offer high quality services and fertility counseling. They even perform in-vitro fertilization and other assistive reproductive therapies, which have many success stories to their credit.

Since a low sperm count can be due to a combination of factors, eliminating them, or improving the deficiencies would have positive results. Here are some important points to follow:

- Low sperm count has been shown to improve by taking more vitamin C, folic acid, and zinc. Simply improving overall nutrition would indeed be beneficial.
- Prolonged exposure to heat should be avoided.
- Prevention of unnecessary stress, and in-



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creased relaxation are also key elements to healthy sperm production.

- Recreational drug use such as alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, and anabolic steroids should be kept at a minimum, if not completely eliminated from your habits. These also place undue stress on vital organs, and affect reproductive organs as well.
- Weight management is also imperative, since being overweight or underweight can adversely affect levels of sex hormones.
- Avoid overexertion when exercising: Overexertion stimulates the production of high levels of adrenal steroid hormones, which can lead to lowered testosterone levels and sperm production).
- Avoid environmental hazards and toxins such as lead, paint, radioactive substances, mercury, pesticides, heavy metals, boron, and benzene).
- Get plenty of sleep

By making the necessary changes to lifestyle patterns, a man's fertility would improve, and the chances for a couple to achieve conception would also increase.



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*When you feel like giving up,  
remember why you held on  
for so long in the first place.*

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- \* In Vitro Fertilization & Embryo Transfer (IVF-ET)
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