

# What Is a Fertility Coach and Do You Need One?

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It's a fact that as a woman's age increases, fertility decreases. (This is why pregnancy at the age of 35 or later is often referred to as a geriatric pregnancy.) While there is no specific age recommendation for when to discuss your fertility with your doctor—though it does start its marked decline at the age of 30—the [recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) is to see a doctor after six months of unsuccessfully trying to conceive.

While your doctor is an invaluable resource, many people are now turning to fertility coaches to help [boost their chances of conceiving](#). How is that different from what you'll get from your visits with your obstetrician-gynecologist (OB-GYN)? The level of support, for one, as well as a deep dive into more than just what is going on inside your body that may be affecting your fertility.

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## What We Often Get Wrong About Fertility

During my first introduction to sexual [education](#), I believed that if you had vaginal intercourse it would result in pregnancy. While that is the case for some people, there are a lot of things that need to occur perfectly and simultaneously for conception. In fact, I lamented with friends how I wish we had been told that getting pregnant can take time (though that would have undermined the priority of sex ed teachings of a religious private school). [Kate Potvin, ERYT-500, CiPP](#), fertility coach and creator of [Flourish Fertility](#) admits that this myth is perpetuated at a young age and that it is common for it to take several months to get pregnant. Why is this? Overall fertility does play a part, but it isn't as simple as that.

"The fertile window of a woman's cycle is only six days maximum," for some couples, adds Lindsay Meisel, chief science editor and head of content at [Ava](#). "Depending on sperm health, cervical mucus quality, age, and other factors, the effective fertile window may be even shorter than that."

The optimal menstrual cycle is actually affected by your overall health and fertility and can actually serve as a barometer for your lifestyle choices, says [Kirsten Karchmer](#), CEO of [Brazen](#), founder and clinical director of [The Texas Center for Reproductive Acupuncture](#) and author of [Seeing Red](#). You want to be eating high quality nutrients (for high quality hormones and blood for good lining and implantation), limit alcohol and cannabis (occasional consumption is often fine) and avoid over-exercising (to keep from depleting your energy reserves).

"What you're looking for is to have a lifestyle to help produce an optimal menstrual cycle (or as close as possible)," Karchmer notes. "You want to look for a 28-day cycle, ovulating on cycle day 14 with good cervical stretchy discharge, no PMS whatsoever, no cramping or clotting, and having enough blood to soak a tampon or pad or fill a Diva Cup or menstrual cup about every four hours without

cramping or clotting. When you have that—plus having basal temperatures that are averaging around 97 to 98.2—at the luteal phase, you're in your optimal state.”

Of course, even if you are eating a clean diet, avoiding alcohol, trying to steer clear of environmental toxins (as much as possible) and exercising, [fertility](#) isn't that simple. [Elizabeth Bechard, RYT, NBC-HWC](#), an integrative fertility coach, reminds us that there are underlying conditions that may come into play, such as [polycystic ovarian syndrome \(PCOS\)](#), endometriosis, eating disorders and even a history of cancer.

“All of that said, infertility is also often caused by factors that may be out of an individual's control; unexplained infertility is painfully common across genders,” Bechard stresses. “Unexplained infertility and/or pregnancy loss can be especially difficult to navigate.”

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## How a Fertility Coach Can Help

As you can see, it can be difficult to navigate fertility in general. This is where a fertility coach comes in (as early or as far along in the process as needed). Often their goal will be to help you achieve as close to that optimal menstrual cycle as possible, which is what you would probably assume from a fertility coach, but Bechard adds they can even counsel you through assisted reproductive techniques and [adoption](#), as well.

“While there are lots of different styles of health coaching and fertility coaching, in general, a fertility coach is someone who supports an individual on their journey to become a parent (whether parenthood occurs through unassisted conception, assisted reproductive technology, or in some cases, adoption),” Bechard explains. “Some fertility coaches offer detailed nutritional and lifestyle advice, whereas others primarily support clients in the process of creating lifestyles that support an environment of optimal fertility. The style of coaching generally depends on the coach's training and background.”

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It may seem counterintuitive to be working with someone else besides your OB-GYN to conceive, but Potvin notes that they often just look at your hormone levels and make sure your uterus and ovaries are healthy. Because there is more to fertility—including the lifestyle factors—a fertility coach actually helps you put it all into practice in everyday [life](#). The other benefit is the one-on-one relationship that is built between coach and patient; your coach gains intimate knowledge of your specific situation and lifestyle, including documenting what has and hasn't been tried to improve chances of conception.

“Fertility coaches generally spend significantly more time with their patients than OB-GYNs, as they largely set their own hours,” reveals Bechard. In many medical offices, doctors rotate and a patient may see a different doctor every time, whereas fertility coaches usually have the chance to develop deeper relationships with their clients.”

She adds that fertility coaches can work with a patient's OB-GYN if requested, as coaches often can't order lab tests or prescribe medications. Patients who are undergoing [in vitro fertilization \(IVF\)](#) and choose to have a fertility coach may want the added layer of communication between their fertility coach and fertility doctor or reproductive endocrinologist.

## What to Look For in a Fertility Coach

When it comes to choosing a fertility coach, it is important to know what type of support you need because, as Karchmer stresses, a fertility coach can mean a lot of different things. She notes that there are a wide range of credentials—they could have taken a weekend workshop, be a certified nutritionist, have a Ph.D. in traditional Chinese medicine or more. This is where the distinction can help you determine which coach is right for you.

“One thing that's really important is that you determine exactly what kind of support that you need, whether that's on an emotional level on a physical level, and a nutrition level, or on a lifestyle level,” Karchmer advises. “As we know, the data are really clear that all of the lifestyle factors—including diet, stress, sleep mindset—all can make a significant impact on your menstrual cycle and your overall fertility.”

This distinction between needing emotional or physical support—or both—is important. The physical part can be a bit easier to navigate as you rework your routine; emotionally, however, it can be lonely. There are a lot of ups and downs when it comes to trying to conceive; a fertility coach can act as a crucial form of support during those times (especially when you'd rather not talk to family or friends about what you're going through).

“The biggest thing I see with my clients is the emotional toll it can take on women and couples,” says Potvin. “One in eight couples will struggle to conceive, so I think it's important for everyone to be sensitive around baby talk. If your friend isn't that excited about your pregnancy announcement, she might be struggling herself. And I think it's time we dropped the, ‘So when are you guys starting a family?’ question from small talk conversations—you never know who's been struggling.”

Thanks to technological advances, an in-person coach isn't your only option (of physical *and* emotional support). Products like [Ava](#)—a fertility tracking bracelet—track physiological signals to tell you when you are fertile. Not only will their app give you guidance on boosting your chances of getting pregnant, it will also give you access to an online global network of other users who are going through similar stages of the process.

“Women can join specific groups based on where they are in their fertility journeys and meet women from around the world who are going through the same thing,” shares Meisel. “We have women who have formed friendships while trying to get pregnant who now have babies the same age and fly across the country to visit each other!”

You may even choose to use a wearable fertility tracker such as Ava to identify any physiological barriers making it difficult to conceive before you decide to get additional one-on-one support from a fertility coach.

## Why Men Should See a Fertility Coach, Too

A fertility coach doesn't just support a woman, however; men can benefit from seeing one, too. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) [notes that a man's fertility declines with age](#) as a woman's does—but not as predictably. And just as a woman's fertility can benefit from healthy lifestyle changes, the same can be said for men. Bechard stresses that while we often think of fertility as a “woman's problem,” research shows otherwise.

“[Research shows](#) that only one-third of infertility cases are the result of female-only factors,” Bechard notes. “Another one-third of cases are the result of male-only factors and one-third are the result of factors from both parties. So two-thirds of the time, fertility challenges involve some issue with sperm!”

Should sperm not be the issue after testing, it is still beneficial for both parties to see the fertility coach together. As stated above, trying to conceive—especially if unsuccessfully—can take a huge emotional toll (and can feel like work, at times). Having both members of a couple present and involved can only add to the emotional support available (and let's face it, men may need that support, too).

## Why Fertility Coaching Isn't Just For 'Men' and 'Women'

We want to recognize that fertility and conception aren't just limited to men and women. This is an important point fertility coaches acknowledge: Not everyone trying to conceive will fit neatly into a gender binary.

“Many of my clients are queer-identified, and it's absolutely possible for individuals who do not identify as women (such as transmen or nonbinary individuals) to conceive if they have a uterus,” Bechard concludes. “As fertility coaches support individuals in cultivating

lifestyles and making changes that support optimal fertility, anyone who is trying to conceive—male, female, transgender, or nonbinary—could benefit from the support of a coach, particularly if there have been challenges already.”

**Read our exclusive interview with *Fox and Friends' Weekend* co-host [Jedediah Bila](#) on her infertility journey.**