

VICTORIA MEDICAL CENTRE

Patient Participation Group Event

"FERTILITY"

Overview of the PPG event held on Tuesday 17 June 2025 in the Group Room at VMC. The event was streamed via Microsoft Teams by Poonam Vaghela, Regional Business Relationship Manager at HCA Healthcare UK.

Speaker: **Mr Ben Jones** a leading Consultant Gynaecologist specialising in fertility at HCA's Fertility Clinic at the Lister Hospital, Chelsea Bridge Road, SW1W 8RH. The Lister Fertility Clinic is recognised as one of the leading private fertility treatment centres in the UK. The Clinic has teams of highly qualified gynaecologists, doctors, nurses and embryologists experienced in treating a wide spectrum of fertility problems. Dr Rankine who initiated and was present at this event recommended that any patient who has concerns about their ability to get pregnant should initially consult their GP.

FEMALE AWARENESS

We know that the chances of conceiving declines with age for women and that egg quality also declines with age. The optimum time for conception is in the early 20s when women's ovarian reserves are at their highest but in our current society women want to start having children later in life. Most women's ability to produce quality eggs starts to diminish more rapidly from the age of 37 years. There is also a greater likelihood of miscarriage at this age due to aneuploidy which is when the eggs have one or more extra or missing chromosomes.

Couples who have failed to conceive and are having regular, frequent sexual intercourse for a year, are able to have basic tests at the GP surgery and can be referred to the fertility clinic at a local NHS hospital providing they meet the age criteria. Another option would be to be referred or to self refer to the Lister Fertility Clinic as a private patient.

If a woman would like to become pregnant one day– but not yet – thanks to amazing advances in fertility treatment she can now safely freeze her eggs until she is ready to become a mum. The timing is crucial. If a woman would like to have one baby then she can leave egg freezing as late as 32-35 years old. For two pregnancies it is better before the age of 27 years and for three possible pregnancies, egg freezing should be before 23 years. Women can also opt to freeze a fertilised embryo. Embryos are more robust and have a higher chance of success than unfertilised eggs. Frozen eggs retain their quality but becoming pregnant over the age of 35 carries hidden, age-related problems as we know such as gestational diabetes and high blood pressure..

MALE AWARENESS

Sperm does not deteriorate with a man's age but it can be damaged by extreme sports. For example, cycling for an hour and a half is fine but cycling for eight hours

can be destructive. Eating processed food can also adversely affect sperm health and male fertility, particularly processed meats, high-fat dairy products, sugary foods and drinks, soy products and alcohol. Foods high in mercury such as some fish, can also be detrimental. The testes where the sperm is produced also need to be kept cool so things like hot baths are not good either.

GENERAL ADVICE

A healthy lifestyle, regular exercise and a Mediterranean diet (more fruit and vegetables, less meat) are conducive to healthy fertility for both men and women. Binge drinking is especially bad but mild drinking can be beneficial. Folic acid and Vitamin B9 are good for fertility in both men and women. In women it can help regulate ovulation and in men it can contribute to healthy sperm production. Folic acid supplements can support overall reproductive health and improve the chances of conception.

For more information please consult the Lister Fertility Clinic website.

Mary Orr, on behalf of the VMC PPG.