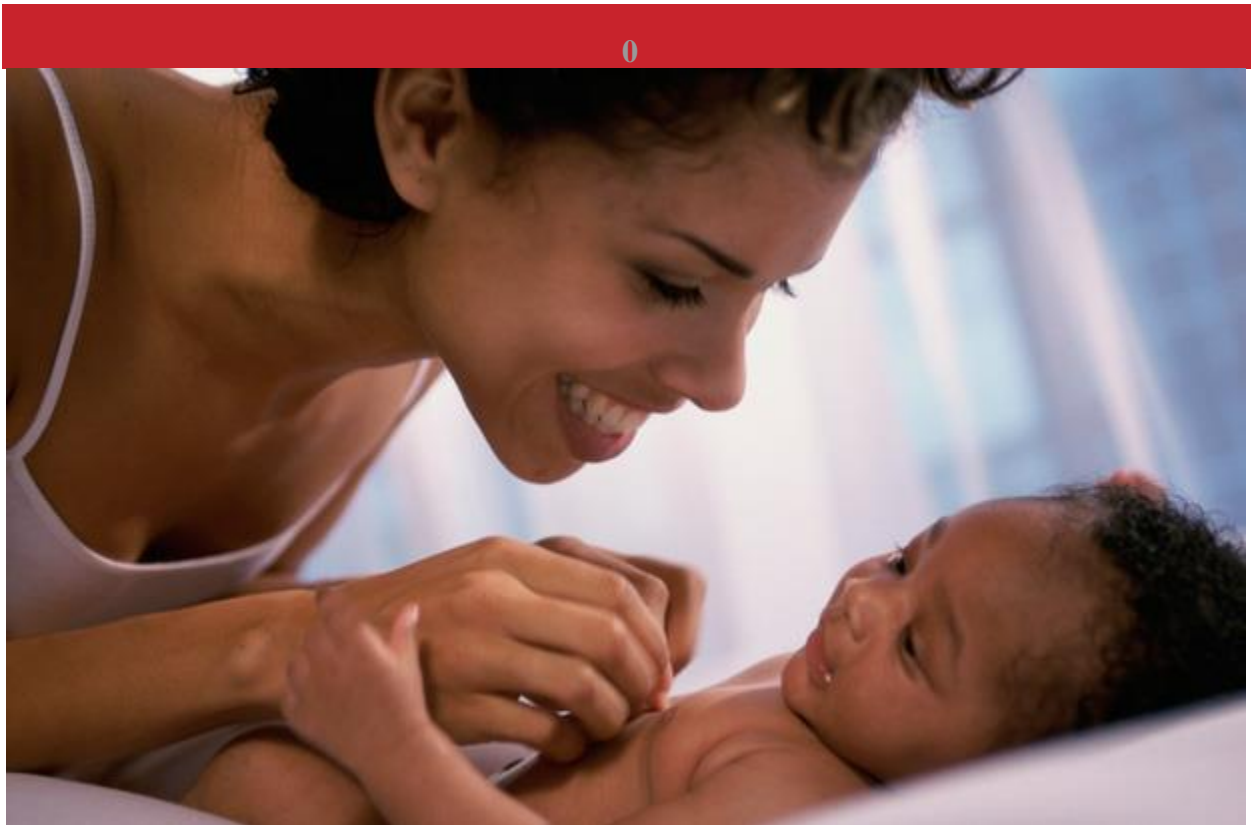


Fertility Treatments: New Advancements Are Changing Pregnancy Options

HEALTHCARE TREATMENTS Recent advancements in assistive reproductive technology (ART) have had amazing results, allowing women to bear children later in life or after undergoing cancer treatments that can destroy healthy eggs.



Yet, not everyone is aware of the fertility treatments available. Still others have the misconception that women can delay childbearing indefinitely. As Dr. Margaretha Rebel, Interim Medical Director with The Fertility Clinic, puts it: “The one obstacle that we can’t get around is that of the female aging.” More than 90 percent of women can get pregnant by age 30, but by age 40 nearly half of women will face infertility.

At age 38, egg quality significantly decreases and aneuploidy (an abnormal number of chromosomes in the nucleus of a cell) increases, says Rebel. About a decade ago, vitrification technology, or rapid freezing, was developed to preserve eggs. This method can result in as many successful pregnancies as fresh eggs — as long as a woman is under 35 when her eggs are extracted.

The typical cost for an egg preservation, which is the same as for an in vitro fertilization (IVF), is \$8,000 to \$10,000 per cycle, plus an annual storage fee of \$300 to \$500, says Rebel. The Ontario government plans to begin funding one cycle of IVF in 2015.

Opposition to Bill 20

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In Quebec, the government recently introduced a bill to discontinue IVF funding in a majority of circumstances. The Infertility Awareness Association of Canada (IAAC) says Bill 20 will decrease access to fertility treatments for Quebeckers and may result in an increase in medical tourism. In addition, IAAC Executive Director Gloria Poirier notes that artificial insemination, which the government would continue to cover, will likely result in an increase in multiple births.

"Twins and triplets are cute," but multiple births often result in risky pregnancies and highly expensive neonatal care as well as health complications for the babies, says Poirier. "Although artificial insemination is cheaper in the short-term, because it produces so many multiple birth pregnancies it becomes expensive in the long term."

Poirier notes that recent advancements in IVF technology allow specialists to better select embryos that will result in live births. Dr. Clifford Librach, Medical Director of the CReATe Fertility Centre, points out two of the most important advancements are time-lapse monitoring, which can provide a visual assessment of an embryo through its entire development, and Preimplantation Genetic Screening (PGS), which screens embryos for aneuploidy.

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