

Introduction

Being overweight has an adverse effect on reproduction.

In women who need assisted conception techniques (such as IVF, ICSI), recent evidence has shown a decrease in pregnancy rates with increasing body mass index (BMI), which is calculated as weight in kg/ height in metres²

Obesity is a common health problem amongst the women of reproductive age, with 57% of women in the UK being either overweight or obese.

World Health Organization classifies BMI as:

Normal	19.0 - 24.9 kg/m ²
Overweight	25.0 – 29.9 kg/m ²
Moderate obesity	30.0 – 34.9 kg/m ²
Severe obesity	35.0 – 39.9 kg/m ²
Very severe obesity	Above 40.0 kg/m ²

Fertility issues and risks associated with obesity:

- Irregular and/ or infrequent menstrual cycles
- Increased risk of infertility
- Increased risk during fertility surgery
- Reduced success with fertility treatments

Potential pregnancy complications with obesity; increased risk of:

- Miscarriage
- High blood pressure during pregnancy
- Diabetes in pregnancy
- Birth defects
- High birth weight infants
- Caesarean section

Benefits of weight loss:

- Weight loss even 5-10% may dramatically improve ovulation and pregnancy rates
- Improved health including reduced chances of developing diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease
- Reduced risk of miscarriage
- Improved self-esteem and well being

Most fertility centers have strict criteria for accepting women for treatment:

- If BMI is more than 30: we advise weight reduction prior to treatment and a discussion with a dietician, mainly due to the reason that majority of the times, simple step such as weight loss can result in spontaneous conception
- If the BMI is more than 30, we are unable to offer any definitive investigation or treatment

Different ways to achieve a normal/desired BMI:

- Targeted approach
- Change in diet
- Exercise regime
- Expert advice from dietitian
- Lifestyle modification