

Want a baby? Here's what to do...

Are you in your 30s and ready to start a family? Or are you younger and planning to wait a few years? As many as one in five babies is born to a woman age 35 or older today. But there's a downside; new studies have shown that fertility begins to decline in our 20s, and while a couple in their mid-20s still has a 74% chance of getting pregnant within a year, couples over 35 have only a 51% chance.

Doctors like Robert Barbieri, M.D., coauthor of *6 Steps to Increased Fertility*, say that eating a nutritious diet, maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking and getting regular medical checkups can keep your reproductive organs in top working order. And you can maximize your chances of getting pregnant by:

● **Taking the Pill.** "Oral contraceptives can reduce the risk of conditions that can lead to infertility, including ovarian cysts, ectopic pregnancy and endometriosis," says reproductive endocrinologist Randy Morris, M.D., at the University of Illinois.



nois School of Medicine. And experts say that the progestin-only pill—which works primarily by thickening cervical mucus to block sperm—may also protect women against the bacteria that cause pelvic inflammatory disease, another major cause of infertility. Talk to your doctor about it.

● **Going natural in the garden.** A new University of Wisconsin study suggests 2,4-D, a weed killer

found in most lawn-care products, contains a chemical that could wreak havoc on your fertility. The compound may be easily absorbed by the skin and lungs, and even small amounts can reduce sperm count, increase sperm abnormalities and, in 20% of cases, even prevent fertilized eggs from implanting in the uterine wall.

Try using a 2,4-D-free weed killer, such as Wow! Plus by Gardens Alive, found in health-food stores.

● **Skipping happy hour.** A Danish study found that women who have more than 10 drinks a week lower their odds of pregnancy by 66%; and indulging in just one drink a week can lower your odds by more than a third! Researchers theorize that alcohol may reduce fertility by affecting hormone levels.

● **Being picky about seafood.** A study reported in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* found that eating lots of seafood contaminated with mercury like tuna, mahi-mahi and swordfish can cause infertility in both men and women.

"Stick to types that have low levels of contamination, such as salmon, flounder and shrimp," says Dr. Morris—and even then, he advises, eat no more than two 3-oz. servings a week.

—Linda Hamilton