

My Success Story

Our recent success story is getting Pregnant at the age of 43. In the world of Fertility, that is considered “Advanced Maternal Age”. We already have a wonderful 3-year old son, but have had to work extremely hard trying to have another child!

Let me introduce this story with a little background. My husband and I were lucky enough to find each other when I was 39 and he was 45. We knew we wanted to start a Family, had a beautiful Spring Wedding in 2002, and immediately started trying to get pregnant. It didn't work on the Honeymoon, but the next month we were successful. Amusingly, the day my pregnancy test was positive, my husband was scheduled to revisit his Fertility doctor, who said he had a “Motility” problem, and wanted to start treatment. Obviously, we canceled the appointment!

Our first pregnancy was a learning adventure, but unfortunately ended in a stillbirth at 18 weeks (another story) due to a chromosomal abnormality (Trisomy 18, Edwards Syndrome), which we knew as an increased risk with Age. The good news is that after a few months of recovery, we got pregnant again on our first attempt. That pregnancy was wonderful, and our son was born in July 2003. He is an amazing gift that brings so much joy to my days as a Mommy.

Details

Overjoyed with the pleasures of Parenthood, and acutely aware of the “Ticking Clock”, we were ready to try again after a few months of recovery from childbirth. We got pregnant again on our first try, but miscarried soon afterwards. Two more tries resulted in two more pregnancies, and two more miscarriages at 7-10 weeks. At this point we had one live birth from five pregnancies, but at least we weren't having trouble getting pregnant!

We went 9 months without conceiving again. During that period, we decided to investigate Fertility Specialists, and interviewed two local clinics. But just before we were ready to start an IVF (In-Vitro Fertilization) program, we turned up pregnant again. Again, it ended in an early miscarriage; and worse, the D&C was incomplete, so we had to have a second one a few months later. We also had some problems with the IVF clinic we were working with during that period, so we decided to switch to another clinic. They were our second choice at first, primarily just because of my preference for a female doctor, but turned out to be much better after all.

After numerous tests at the new clinic, we started our first IVF cycle; meaning a whole lot of drugs injected into my belly. The objective is to stimulate the Ovaries to produce more follicles that can be “harvested” for eggs, which can be fertilized and implanted in order to increase the chances of a viable pregnancy. Unfortunately, I did not respond very well to the drugs, and only produced three eggs. Worse, Hurricane Rita arrived the week we were ready to harvest, and the lab was shut down. So we had to convert from an IVF to IUI (Intra-Uterine Insemination), and were very disappointed when that did not result in a pregnancy.

Not to be dissuaded (did I mention we are both endurance athletes), we started a second cycle after another month of recovery. This time my response to the drugs was even smaller, with only one mature follicle, which is not deemed sufficient for IVF. So again we converted to IUI, and again no pregnancy. The third time was better, as we were back to 3 eggs, of which two fertilized and began to grow in the lab. One was high quality and one marginal, and we injected both back into the Uterus; hopeful this time that one would be viable. But again, no pregnancy; so we tried a fourth cycle, resulting in two eggs, both fertilized and injected, and again no Pregnancy.

Back to Nature

By now we were a bit frustrated, and my body was getting weary of all the drugs. So we decided to “take a break”. We had already begun to investigate other options: adoption or donor eggs. During this time I resumed my regular workout schedule and signed up for three triathlon races. I was getting back in shape, and finished pretty close behind my husband in the first race. On one of our evening training rides I was feeling very sluggish and thirsty, but thought it was probably just the summer heat.

That weekend, as we were preparing for a long bike ride with friends, something told me to take a pregnancy test, even though my cycle was not due for several days. It was positive, so we canceled our ride and rushed to the clinic for a blood test, which confirmed that I was pregnant! We had decided to try the old-fashioned way during our IVF break, although we did use an ovulation predictor kit (OPK) as usual to optimize the timing. But it was still quite a surprise! To date, we are 17 weeks into this pregnancy, have seen our Son wave to us on the Ultrasound, and just got back good results from the preliminary Amniocentesis test.

Conclusion

This is our success story, and we hope it inspires other couples that struggle with fertility problems. Doctors can bring incredible Science to the subject of Fertility. But still, Mother Nature can be a very random and unpredictable thing. The statistics told us that we probably had less than 5% chance of conceiving with IVF, let alone naturally, due to my advanced maternal age. But, if we didn't try, the odds are guaranteed to be zero. During this journey with Fertility, we joined a monthly support group that we both benefited from immensely. Our message of Hope is that there is help out there, and you do have options!