

Further information

Information on who to contact, ie web sites / telephone numbers of other departments / organisations which may be of help.

How to contact us

Obstetrics and Gynaecology

St Albans City Hospital

West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust

Waverley Road

St Albans

Hertfordshire

AL3 5PN



**West Hertfordshire
Hospitals**
NHS Trust



A guide to...

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email westherts.pals@nhs.net



Author	Obstetrics and Gynaecology
Department	Obstetrics and Gynaecology
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Body Mass Index and Fertility

Patient information

Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Watford General Hospital

Hemel Hempstead Hospital

St Albans City Hospital

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 Organisation 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