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Swiss Medical Competence

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HIRSLANDEN FERTILITY CENTRE ST. ANNA CLINIC

Advice, treatment and support
IN THE CASE OF AN UNFULFILLED DESIRE TO HAVE CHILDREN





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FOREWORD

The desire to have your own child is the most natural thing in the world, felt by most people at some stage in their lives. If, however, this desire remains unfulfilled, it can have serious consequences for the emotional state and everyday life of the couple concerned: their personal life plan becomes confused while a lack of understanding in the social sphere and conflict in the perception of their gender and role can cause lasting emotional distress. The aim of the Hirslanden fertility consultations at the St. Anna Clinic is to identify the causes of infertility, to propose an appropriate therapy where necessary and to support the couple during this difficult phase in their life.

The reasons for fertility problems are numerous and varied – as are possibilities for diagnosis and therapy. The aim of this brochure is to give couples suffering infertility problems an insight into medical diagnosis and treatment and to encourage them to take the first step.

We would be happy for you to contact us for an in-depth consultation, in which we can talk about your situation and a possible course of action. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Sabine Steimann
Head Doctor at the Hirslanden Fertility Centre



KEEPING HOPE ALIVE

Infertility refers to a situation where couples engage in regular unprotected sexual intercourse for more than twelve months without pregnancy occurring. Infertility is nothing unusual – in Switzerland this situation affects about one couple in six. There are several reasons for this phenomenon: in about 30% of cases, either the male or female partner is sterile while in another 30% of cases, both partners are sterile. In about 10% of cases, there are no obvious reasons for fertility problems.

In the event of infertility, the causes should be investigated after about one year. For women over the age of 35, an examination is recommended after six months as ovarian reserves are dependent on the age of a woman.





CAUSES OF FERTILITY PROBLEMS

The most frequent cause among women is a low ovarian reserve, which may be caused by illness, such as endometriosis, an operation in which part of an ovary was removed or the advancing age of the woman. A dysfunction in follicular growth may also reduce fertility. Other causes include impairment or blockage of the fallopian tubes, a malformation of the uterus or a disruptive element in the uterus, e.g. a muscle tumour (myoma) in the wall of the uterus. Lifestyle factors, such as smoking, being overweight/underweight and a lack of exercise can also have a negative effect on fertility.

In men, the key factor is sperm quality. This involves the sperm count, sperm morphology and sperm motility. Possible reasons for fertility problems also include an undiagnosed undescended testicle, a blockage of the sperm duct or an inflammation of the testicles or epididymis. Other causes may include a hormonal

imbalance or, in the event of a greatly reduced sperm quality, genetic defects. Male fertility is also influenced by lifestyle factors, such as the consumption of nicotine, cannabis or anabolic substances.



DIAGNOSIS AT THE HIRSLANDEN FERTILITY CENTRE

The diagnosis of infertility involves several steps:

Initial discussion with the couple

At this stage, we discuss the couple's wishes and fears, their medical history is noted and the next steps are determined together.

Test cycle for women

The ovarian reserve and follicular development are examined by means of ultrasound and hormone analyses.

Sperm analysis and hormone regulation in men

Secondary examinations

These include testing fallopian tube patency by means of an X-ray examination or a laparoscopy and examining the cavities of the uterus by means of hydrosonegography or a hysteroscopy. An examination of genetic causes is performed in cases of serious fertility problems in men or after several miscarriages.





TREATMENT POSSIBILITIES

The Hirslanden Fertility Centre offers numerous different treatment possibilities. During a personal consultation, you are given detailed information concerning the chances and risks of each method.

Hormone treatment to induce ovulation (ovulation induction)

In the event of a dysfunction at the follicular stage or at ovulation, hormone treatment is carried out. Depending on the situation, the medicine is administered either in tablet form or as an injection. The stimulation is monitored by ultrasound. If you wish to induce the development of several ova, for instance for in vitro fertilisation, the hormone treatment must be administered by injection.

Intrauterine insemination (IUI)

In the event of an impairment of the male erection or ejaculation, an insemination procedure can be carried out. This involves introducing the processed semen (a concentrate of fertile spermatozoa) directly

into the woman's uterus using a catheter in a painless procedure which last only a few minutes. Insemination is performed in conjunction with a hormone treatment. This treatment method can also be used in the event of dysfunctional follicular growth or ovulation. However, a prerequisite for this treatment is only a small reduction in sperm quality and fallopian tube patency.

Test-tube fertilisation

There are two different types of test-tube fertilisation: in vitro fertilisation (IVF) and intra cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI).

IVF allows the female ovum to be fertilised by the male sperm cell outside the body. This method is used in the case of tubal blockage, low ovarian reserves or unexplained sterility. Mature ova are retrieved from the woman's ovary and mixed with the man's processed sperm in a test tube. The ovum is then fertilised by the sperm with no outside influence.





ICSI is performed in the event of male fertility problems. The procedure involves injecting male sperm cells into the ovum in a test tube, thereby encouraging the fertilisation of the egg. The difference between IVF and ICSI concerns the laboratory procedure only and does not influence the treatment of the respective partners.

Puncture (egg retrieval) takes place in the premises of our Fertility Centre and in the presence of the partner. The procedure is generally performed using a mild sedative and painkiller rather than a general anaesthetic. To ensure that we do not miss the ideal puncture time, we are also open at weekends. Fertilisation can be assessed on the day after the procedure. Generally, two or three fertilised eggs are allowed to develop to the embryo stage. Any surplus fertilised ova are frozen (cryoconservation). The embryo is transferred to the uterus between two and five days after egg retrieval.

Zygote freezing

Any surplus fertilised eggs which have not been transferred to the uterus are frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored. They can be thawed out at a later date and transferred to the uterus. Zygote storage is governed by law and cannot exceed five years.

Freezing testicular tissue (cryo-TESE)

In the event of a total lack of sperm cells in ejaculated semen, a testicular biopsy can determine whether sperm cells are being produced. If this is the case, it is possible to freeze the testicular tissue that has been removed with a view to performing a testicular sperm extraction (TESE) at a later date. This procedure involves obtaining sperm cells from the frozen testicular tissue and using them for a test-tube fertilisation process (ICSI).

Freezing sperm cells

Chemotherapy can greatly impair the fertility of a man. That is why we offer a patient the chance to freeze sperm cells before undergoing a cancer treatment (fertility reserve).



OUR TEAM



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HOW TO FIND US

St. Anna Clinic

The St. Anna Clinic is located on the north-western outskirts of Lucerne on an area of raised ground in green surroundings. The clinic provides a beautiful view over Lake Lucerne and the foothills of the Alps.

By public transport

Train (SBB) to Lucerne main station (Luzern Hauptbahnhof), Bus no. 14 towards "Brüelstrasse", leaving the bus at the "St. Anna" stop

By car

All access roads are signposted from the Luzern City motorway exit. There is ample parking space in the clinic's private car park.



Alpenstrasse 1 Medical practice

The practice is located centrally in the city of Lucerne. Egg retrieval and embryo transfer are performed in conjunction with the clinic's Fertility Centre. Further treatments and advice are provided in the practice.