

## Thinking about adoption: Fertility issues

*Adoption is one of a range of alternatives that you may be considering if you cannot conceive and give birth to a child. You may have experienced miscarriages or secondary infertility.*

### Your Options

Couples and single people who have fertility issues are faced with a number of possible options including:

- Assisted conception (IVF and other fertility treatments)
- Donor insemination or surrogacy
- Adoption
- Doing nothing, letting life take its course
- Deciding to remain child free

### Seek Advice

Each of these alternatives will be right for some people, and we would encourage anyone with fertility issues to take time and seek information, advice and counselling in order to work out the best way forward for themselves. You can ask questions of your GP or medical consultant, approach infertility support organisations, and contact a counsellor who specialises in infertility.

### Adoption: What do I need to know?

The following information will be particularly relevant if you are exploring adoption due to fertility issues or you are thinking of taking the next step

**There is no upper age limit for adoption**, unlike assisted conception, so don't feel that you have to rush if you have tried fertility treatments without success. The adoption process nowadays is much faster than it used to be, and you could be approved to adopt in as little as six months. It is advisable to take a break after your last treatment or after a miscarriage, and adoption agencies will often prefer that you wait at least 6 months before starting an adoption assessment.

**Adoption is a great way to become a parent but not a direct alternative to conception.** It is important to take time to work through grieving and loss to feel emotionally ready to move on and devote your energies to adoption. If you are a couple you both need to feel ready for the adoption process.

**You don't have to try fertility treatments first.** Adoption can be a positive first choice if you are unable to conceive. Some people have moral or religious objections to assisted conception, some would rather avoid any unpleasant symptoms and side effects of treatment, some consider the prospects of success too slim, and some find their motivation to love and parent a child or children that need a family is stronger than the biological drive to produce a child that shares their genes.

**You don't have to be a couple.** Adoption agencies in England have been approving single people to adopt children for many years, and this is the case no matter what your sexual orientation.

**You have the strength to become an adopter.** If you have undergone fertility treatment and are now considering adoption, you have already been through a lot. Research shows that for many couples coping with infertility strengthens their relationship. Adoption agencies welcome couples whose relationships are resilient and have stood the test of time, and you may have learned a lot about dealing with stress and emotional challenges which will stand you in good stead when you become parents.

**Already have children? Consider their needs.** If you have secondary infertility (unable to have a second or subsequent child) adoption can be a great way to increase or complete your family. How to prepare for this and the needs of your existing child or children will be an important part of the assessment. Agencies will generally want the adopted child to be the youngest in the family by at least 2 years and preferably more, as a reasonable age gap and giving each child space has been shown in research to be beneficial.

**There are very few tiny babies available for adoption.** It is common for potential adopters who have fertility issues to want to adopt a baby as young as possible. It is alright to be honest about this if it is part of your motivation to adopt, but it also helps if you have a realistic idea of the children who need adoptive families. Most children adopted are between 12 months – 4 years old, and it is rare for a baby to be voluntarily relinquished at birth. All adopted children will need lots of love, nurture, time and attention from their new parent/s. Ask adoption agencies about the age range of children they are looking for parents for and consider keeping an open mind, as many adopters find their views change during the assessment process.

**Agencies will be sensitive to your situation.** All adoption agencies are likely to have experience of assessing people who are considering adoption due to infertility or difficulties conceiving. You can expect agencies to deal sensitively with your enquiries. When you are starting the adoption process with an adoption agency they will ask about your motivation to adopt and will also ask that you don't attempt to conceive once you are being assessed to adopt.

If you feel ready to approach an adoption agency you can search for local agencies (<http://bit.ly/agcyfndr>) and chat things through with a few as they are happy to give information and answer questions even if you're not yet sure about adoption, so do contact them if you want to find out more.

We are also here to provide information and answer questions at any stage along the way, so don't hesitate to get in touch.