

My provider says I have unexplained infertility, what could this mean?

Infertility: The inability to conceive after 12 months of frequent unprotected intercourse

Unexplained: normal semen analysis, evidence of ovulation, evidence of open fallopian tube(s), normal uterine cavity, normal egg reserve testing

Endometriosis

What: A disease in which tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus

Next steps: Report pertinent symptoms, Surgery not recommended universally unless experiencing pain as studies show to achieve one live birth would need to operate on 30 patients. Consider IUI or IVF.

Lifestyle

What: Tobacco use, excessive alcohol, and obesity have all been associated with infertility

Next steps: Try to optimize lifestyle, mediterranean diet, achieve healthy weight

Genetic causes

What: There may be genetic links to infertility

Next steps: Share pertinent family history with physician. No specific genetic panel yet but studies ongoing.

Toxins

What: Environmental toxins and exposures have been linked to infertility

Next steps: Limit exposure to plastics, toxins

Endocrine causes

What: Endocrine issues such as untreated thyroid issues and diabetes may contribute to infertility

Next steps: Testing not indicated for all but considered on a case by case basis and includes blood work.

Autoimmune Disease

What: Conditions including Celiac disease and Hashimoto's thyroiditis have been associated with infertility

Next steps: Report pertinent symptoms. Testing on a case by case basis with optimization of condition

Subtle abnormalities of egg or sperm function and/or quality

What: May lead to poor fertilization or poor embryo development. Can be related to age.

Next steps: Difficult to appreciate with low tech treatments. Can be uncovered if IVF performed