

Fact Sheet for Relatives and Friends



It can be difficult for family and friends to understand the needs of someone who is finding it difficult to have a baby.

We have designed this fact sheet to help family and friends understand how they can offer support. By offering encouragement and understanding, or just being there to listen to them, can help guide them on their long road to resolving their infertility. This kind of support is very valuable and crucial to their emotional healing.

FACTS Finding reasons why someone cannot have a baby takes time
Tests and investigations may not be quick or simple
Solutions and treatment may be complex and costly

FEELINGS Please don't ask unhelpful questions like "When are you going to have a baby?"
They may not know if they can have a child, much less when it will be.

FACTS Many factors contribute to infertility and there are many different treatment options
Sometimes the solution to the problem may be challenging
What affects one person may not have the same solution for another

FEELINGS Infertility is a personal experience and cannot be compared or measured.
Wanting a baby, and dreading it may not be possible, is a very real fear.

FACTS Try to listen, don't judge and never compare their problem to something you may have read or heard.
1 in 6 couples of reproductive age will experience infertility after 12 months of trying
90% of infertility has a known medical cause

FEELINGS Please don't say "relax" or "take a holiday"
It is helpful and supportive to listen and try to understand what your friend or family member is experiencing.

FACTS Some people consider infertility to be a private concern
Others find comfort sharing their concerns with close friends and family members
It is normal for people to feel sad, angry or depressed at times

FEELINGS Respecting someone's need for privacy will be appreciated, as will offering support if and when they want to talk.

Be prepared to accept that sometimes they may feel angry, sad and depressed.

FACTS Infertility can make someone feel inadequate and that they have no control over their body

FEELINGS Help them to see their strengths, qualities and achievements in other areas of their lives.

FACTS Having one pregnancy or child does not mean it will be easy to fall pregnant again
If you feel your family is incomplete the result can be devastating and frustrating

FEELINGS You can offer support by understanding what this means to them.

Please don't say "You're lucky to have a child at all"

FACTS 1 in 5 pregnancies end in miscarriage
Some women experience recurrent miscarriage, two or more pregnancy losses

FEELINGS Try and understand their mixed feelings of hope, anxiety, guilt and despair.
Please don't try to offer false hope or be unduly pessimistic. A woman who has miscarried has enough feelings of her own to cope with and her loss is very real. Please don't forget that if she has a partner, they have also experienced the loss of their baby and will need your support and understanding too.