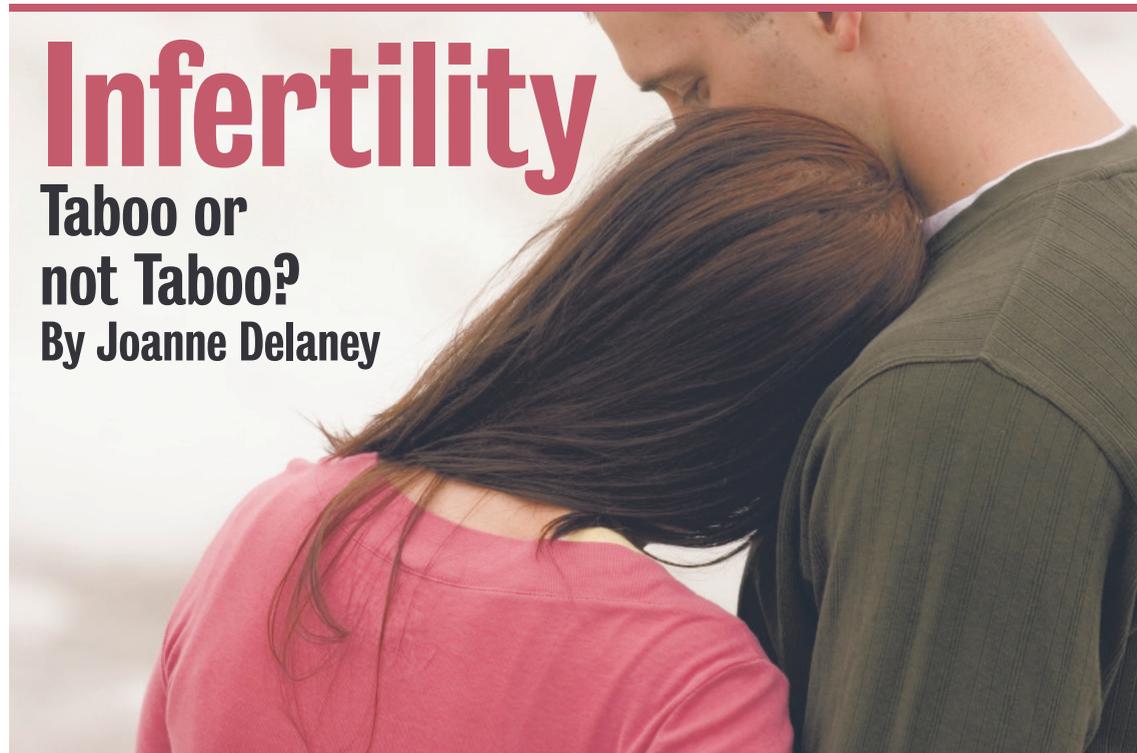


# Infertility

## Taboo or not Taboo?

By Joanne Delaney



# A mans perspective on infertility

I have often sat and talked with my wife about the hidden pain that's associated with infertility. Every time we celebrate the birth of a child and congratulate the proud parents part of me wishes that it was me

that was the proud father and that my wife was the one holding the newborn baby. Each time we visit a couple with a newborn child we are faced with questions that are trivial to most and always answered in the same jovial

way. "When are you guys going to have kids".

My wife and I have been together for over a decade and married for 4 years now and naturally after the wedding the questions were asked by family and friends

alike. Although we always knew that both of us wanted to have kids we were set on making sure that were careful as we wanted to provide the best upbringing for them We bought a house, got married and expected the natural to happen and a son or daughter to be born. After years of marriage and countless births to friends and family we do not have our own. Our family and friends still ask the same questions and we answer as we have always done. I want to share with you what infertility is like from the perspective of a Man.

Infertility is something that we do not commonly talk about. Sure, from time to time we laugh and joke about how one day we will all have sons

that we are proud of and how we cannot wait to bring them to their first football game and watch them play for Cork and Ireland. I have friends who vary in age from mid-twenties to forty plus who although are married do not have kids. We don't speak about the reasons behind this and consciously avoid the subject and defer the conversation to something like football or how bad the economy is. The reality is that Infertility is confined to the closet. Who wants to enlist the help of another person to conceive a baby?

to support my wife. She herself was putting on a brave face but I could see this was taking a toll on her. A million things go through your head when something like this happens and I will never forget the tears and pain my wife endured during, afterwards and to this day. Although we came through this tough time and vowed to keep trying it's hard to believe that it was 7 years ago I am frustrated and maybe wrongly so to think that she will never be happy.

Recently we have begun working with specialists in the area of In-

about this to him and although we have spoken since it will never be a topic of discussion.

I have been surprised by the reach that infertility has across all spectrums of our social order. Over the years I have witnessed countless couples of all demographics of society going through the same process of fertility treatment as my wife and I.

I'm certain that amongst some of you reading this can relate to this struggle and will continue to not speak about it with male friends. You may struggle with a sense of doubt but are confident and successful in other areas of your life.

Most will never understood the weight of burden that this is to a man's life and I know from experience the pain that a woman suffers when it comes to infertility, and even the weight it places on a relationship.



As a man it's in our nature to reproduce and it should be under our control. The thought someone else knowing about this stirs a feeling of helplessness. We, by our very definition: men; fix things and don't like giving away this feeling of security. Have you ever known a man that has stopped and asked someone for directions on a journey? No. We have an underlying coding that things under our control are accomplished and an inherent feeling of insecurity grows the more this is beyond our reach. We despise the thought of not being the holders of our destiny and with infertility this is taken out of our control and the feeling is horrible.

Whatever the reason for infertility, befitting it to the man or woman conversation amongst the male is not very forthcoming.

We have been trying to conceive for some years now. What makes the fact we do not yet have children worse is that my wife has suffered a miscarriage some years back. After the initial unbridled joy of this news and sharing it with a very select few close family members we suffered the awful news. Being a man I wanted to be there



fertility. My wife wants to explore every avenue available to us and has enlisted the expertise of a well-known consultant who has been working very closely with us. It's taken many years and countless visits to clinics, surgeries and not to mention the mental toll this has taken on my wife but we are working through it. I have never spoken about this with another male friend. Recently at a clinic appointment we were sitting in the waiting area when a work colleague and his wife sat adjacent to us. We shared pleasantries but spoke no more. Judging by his body language he shared the same uncomfortable feeling as I did. There were awkward glances and when it became our turn to enter the consultant's office a brief glance and nod was shared. I have no intention of every speaking

I urge you to speak with others about this that you may know in the same situation.

I, like you reading this, share a sense of insecurity about sharing this most personal of information with others but as someone who wants to speak about it I can assure you that once the conversation begins it will help alleviate the burden that this brings to each of us.

It's a subject that spoken about daily amongst the social media fraternity but struggles when face to face and will most likely never reach the table of discussion freely amongst us will always be there. Silent, hidden, clouded and held deep within a mans psyche bursting to get out until the time you approach a friend and say "Congratulations" on the birth of your son/daughter.

Ruth Reidy  
Clinical Nutrition  
Consultancy



Nutrition4u Clinics

6 New Cork Road Midleton



& The Livinghealth Clinic  
Mitchelstown

From April 1st new office opening  
in 42 Eastgate Drive, Little Island.

Tel: 087 2385230

Email: [ruth@nutrition4u.ie](mailto:ruth@nutrition4u.ie)

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## One of the greatest challenges

Dealing with the issue of Infertility is one of the greatest challenges that a couple has to face. The role of nutrition, and of food, has for a long-time been linked to successful human reproduction. We're very familiar with the idea that a woman needs to prepare her body for pregnancy. Weight reduction that gets body weight closer to the ideal Body Mass Index (BMI) of 18.5-24.9Kg/m<sup>2</sup> is of benefit. So too is having a good intake of certain vitamins and minerals, with

folic acid being among the most important of these. These changes can also improve fertility. What is new, and probably surprising to many, is that it is equally important for the prospective Dad to make these changes too. Fertility and both sperm count & quality can be influenced by diet and body weight.

So in the midst of factors that are somewhat outside of your control, this is one area that you can control. As a couple, you can take these positive steps towards a more healthful lifestyle and improve your weight, health and fertility.

Ruth Reidy  
Clinical Nutritionist/Dietitian  
M.I.N.D.I.