



## Too Old for Pregnancy?

**Q.** How old is too old for a woman to try to get pregnant?

**A.** The uterus can carry a pregnancy even after a woman goes through menopause, as long as the hormones necessary to prepare and support the uterine lining are available. The problem for older women is usually with the eggs. Women are born with all the eggs they will ever have, and the best ones are used first. This means that women over the age of 40 are basically using “leftovers.” Through the years, these eggs have been exposed to various environmental insults. In addition, aging itself usually causes the parts of the egg responsible for separating chromosomes evenly to make more and more errors. These eggs are “unbalanced” in terms of the chromosome numbers, resulting in embryos that do not develop properly. After age 43, pregnancy with a woman’s own eggs becomes very difficult both because of fewer pregnancies and more miscarriages. We do not yet have a way to fix or improve an older woman’s eggs. However, if a woman is willing to consider the use of donor eggs, pregnancy rates are excellent – up to a 70 percent chance for success with a single attempt.

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## Lower Sex Drive?

**Q.** I am 40 years old and my sex drive seems to be lower than ever. I love my husband, but my libido is waning. What do I do?

**A.** Sexual problems affect most men and women at some point in their sexual lives. Most often, these problems are short lived and easily fixed. A decrease in a woman’s sex drive may be caused by physical or emotional problems or a combination of both. Physical problems include menopause, physical illness, pregnancy, painful sex, or medications. Emotional issues stem from stress in the home or workplace, poor communication between partners, unrealistic expectations about sexual performance, problems with trust and commitment, a new baby at home, relationship discord, or a lack of physical attraction. For women, the sexual response is as much emotional as it is physical; therefore, any situation that impacts either of these can result in a lack of desire. In younger women (non menopausal) who are not physically ill, do not suffer from painful sex, or are not on certain medications, the decrease in sex drive is almost always emotional. Having said all this, my suggestion to you is that you look at your situation and try to determine what applies to you and your relationship. Most often, once couples begin to communicate and discover where the problems stem from, a resolution can be reached. For couples who together cannot reach a resolution, sex counseling is a realistic and viable alternative.

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## Tingling Sensation in Leg?

**Q.** I have developed a tingling sensation that runs down the back of my leg to my ankle. It comes and goes. What is causing this, and what should I do?

**A.** The symptom you describe can be one of several things, but it is most closely associated with sciatica. Loosely defined, sciatica refers to pain down the leg. More narrowly, sciatica describes pain that emanates from the sciatic nerve, which is a large conglomeration of nerve roots in the posterior leg. The pain is caused by irritation of this particular nerve, which may occur at multiple locations, but most commonly occurs at the exiting of one of the sciatic nerve roots from the spinal cord. The most common irritants at this particular location include herniated disc(s) and spinal arthritis. Often, sciatica is a self-limited entity, which means that it goes away on its own in a short amount of time. During this time period, it is important to partake in gentle lower extremity exercises and to avoid activities or movements that provoke the pain. If the pain is severe or has lasted longer than 4-6 weeks, I recommend that you visit your healthcare provider. Further diagnostic testing and treatment modalities may prove beneficial.

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## Bleeding Gums?

**Q.** My gums bleed when I brush them, even though I take proper care of them and brush twice daily. What could be the reason?

**A.** There are many reasons gums bleed when brushing. The most common reason is gingivitis, which is usually reversible with good oral hygiene. Once a good oral hygiene regime is in place that includes brushing at least twice a day and flossing at least once a day, there is normally resolution in the bleeding. However, if you are already doing this, then I suspect that there is tartar under the gums that needs to be professionally removed. For treatment, you should go to a good dentist or dental hygienist for a proper cleaning. It may take more than one visit and could require you to be numbed for it to be done comfortably. Remember, bleeding gums are NOT healthy—they are part of a disease process. Gingivitis is the precursor to periodontitis, a more serious gum disease. It is important to get bleeding gums treated quickly before permanent damage is done. There is one common exception to this: if you are pregnant, a hormonal issue may cause the gums to be inflamed. Keep up oral

hygiene practices and once the baby is born, your gums should return to normal.

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## Lump in Abdomen?

**Q.** I noticed the other day that I had a lump in the lower part of my abdomen. A friend of mine said it may be a hernia. How do I tell, and what should I do?

**A.** The most common causes of lumps of the abdominal wall are hernias and lipomas. Lipomas are benign tumors of fatty tissue and will grow right where they are but won’t spread to other parts of the body. They can cause discomfort and may need to be removed if they are in places besides the abdominal wall where they can cause

problems. Lipomas are most often confused with another “lump” that can occur on the abdomen called a hernia. A hernia is just a hole in the connective tissue that lies underneath the skin. Contents of the abdomen—fat, intestines, etc.—can protrude through that hole and cause a lump. Most of the time, a hernia lump will “go away” when you lie down and “come back” when you stand back up. The difference between the two lumps is important because the hernia and its contents can cause considerable pain and other problems if the tissue caught in the hole gets squeezed and has its blood supply compromised. Worse, if the tissue in the hernia has the blood supply cut off, i.e. a strangulated hernia, it can be life threatening. Any hernia could become strangulated but most don’t. They just cause a lump that can enlarge over time as the hole enlarges. Any lump should probably be checked out by your doctor, and you might be asked to see a surgeon if your lump becomes painful.

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