

Obesity and Infertility

Obesity is increasing rapidly among women all over the world. It has now become a world epidemic especially in western countries. Obesity is defined by an extraordinarily high body mass index (BMI) in which the index is a reflection of body fat content. According to a local survey conducted by the Department of Health in 2003, 1 in 4 women were at least overweight (BMI>23) amongst the about 1,000 interviewees.

Obesity is associated with many health problems and it can also have negative effect on women's reproductive health.

The common causes for female infertility are fallopian tube obstruction, endometriosis and anovulation. Previous overseas study showed that the chance for women having ovulatory infertility is 30% higher in women with BMI ranged between 24 and 31 as compared to that of normal weight women, for those with BMI over 31, the chance is even 170% higher. In obese women with anovulation, the underlying cause is most likely due to polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). PCOS is associated with overweight, evidence of elevated male hormone secretion such as hairiness, male-pattern hair loss and acne, high cholesterol level and insulin resistance. 30% to 50% of women who have PCOS are obese, and the severity of both metabolic and clinical symptoms is positively correlated with BMI.