

The question is often asked exactly when conception occurs, especially if intercourse and ovulation are on separate days. There are many things that come into play here leading up to conception. The article below explains to you a clearer picture of this wonderful process.

How Conception Occurs



Ok – we aren't overly stupid adults... we do know how conception occurs but some of the finer points might just surprise you.

Human conception is a miraculous and complex event. It is perhaps more surprising that pregnancy occurs so often than that it fails sometimes. A human egg is released every month from a woman's ovary under the influence of a complex cycle of hormones. The hormones are released by the pituitary gland and the hypothalamus, located in the brain. The egg is swept into the fallopian tubes by delicate projections (called the fimbria) at the end of the tubes, where it is normally fertilized by the man's sperm. The fertilized egg then moves down the tube and, helped along by the tiny hair-like cilia that line the tube, enters the uterus, or womb. The embryo must implant into the lining of the uterus (the endometrium). There it starts to produce hormones that will stimulate its growth. The site in the ovary, called the corpus luteum, from which the egg was released, must produce enough of the hormone progesterone to sustain the pregnancy for the first three months. After that the placenta takes over that job.

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The woman's uterus must be structurally sound and capable of expanding to contain the growing fetus. The cervix, the opening of the uterus, must be strong



Did you know all the eggs for a woman's lifetime are stored in her ovaries? Women do not continually produce eggs. This is different from men, who continuously make more sperm.

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enough to hold in the baby until it is ready to be born.

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It is estimated that it takes a fertile couple having regular sexual intercourse an average of six months to conceive. At any point, something can go wrong and pregnancy will not result:

- Sometimes an egg is not released.
- The egg and sperm may fail to meet and fertilize.
- Many early embryos fail to implant, and sometimes an implanted embryo fails to develop or is rejected by the mother's body.
- An abnormality in the fetus or a lack of sufficient levels of the hormone progesterone may make it impossible for the embryo to survive, resulting in a miscarriage.

Roughly one-third of infertility is caused by a problem in the woman, one-third by a problem in the man. Of the last one-third of cases, infertility is caused by a combination of problems in both partners or, in about 20% of these cases, is unexplained (American Society for Reproductive Medicine, "Frequently Asked Questions about Infertility," 1996). The statistics for unexplained infertility have tended to fall with better diagnosis and an improved

understanding of what causes infertility, but it is still more common than many doctors like to admit.

The most common cause of female infertility is failure to ovulate, and this condition is the easiest to treat. A course of fertility drugs can be given to see if these will activate the ovaries. There are several fertility drugs, and while the doctor may know which is the best to try, often he simply has to go through each in turn, trying different doses, to see what is or is not successful. This can make the woman feel like a human guinea pig. Tests into other areas of infertility can be long, complicated and invasive. Male infertility is the hardest to treat.