

Self-Insemination

Self-insemination (home insemination) is the introduction of sperm into the vagina without intercourse. Self-insemination can be done at home because it does not involve introducing sperm into the uterus. The chances of getting pregnant with self-insemination are similar to the chances of pregnancy through intercourse.

Preparing for Insemination

One follicle grows in the ovaries every month. A follicle contains an egg. When the follicle is large enough, it pops open and the egg is released. This is called ovulation. From the moment of ovulation, an egg can survive for about 24 hours. Sperm can usually live in a woman's body for 2-3 days. For pregnancy, the egg cell must be fertilised by a sperm cell. Since the egg and the sperm only live for a short time, it is important to time self-insemination well.

Timing the Ovulation

To determine the right moment of self-insemination, you need to know when ovulation occurs. This is because, from the moment of ovulation, the egg can be fertilised by a sperm cell for 24 hours. The following methods can be used to predict the time of ovulation:

- **Calculating the ovulation**

In the case of a regular cycle, the time of ovulation can be approximately calculated. A cycle is said to be regular if it is between 21 and 35 days, with a maximum variation of 7 days. The cycle length is calculated by counting from the first day of one menstruation to the first day of the next.

Ovulation almost always occurs 14 days before the start of the next menstruation. With a regular cycle of 28 days, ovulation will occur around the 14th day of the cycle. With a regular cycle of 32 days, ovulation will occur around the 18th day of the cycle.

To get a good idea of the above, you could try using a menstrual calendar via an app on your mobile phone.

If the number of days of your cycle is different every month, you have an irregular cycle. This is not unusual but does make the above method more difficult. You are then better off using ovulation tests as described below.

The information in this brochure is general in nature and is intended to give you an idea of the care and guidance you can expect. In your own situation, other advice or procedures may apply. This brochure is therefore only an addition to the specific (verbal) information from your specialist or practitioner.

- **Ovulation tests (LH tests)**

The time of ovulation can be determined using ovulation tests (LH tests). An LH peak occurs about 24 hours before ovulation. LH is the Luteinising Hormone that triggers ovulation. Ovulation tests can be used to detect the LH peak and thus determine the moment of ovulation.

If your cycle is regular, start ovulation testing 3 days before you think ovulation is coming. With a cycle of 28 days, ovulation will occur around the 14th day of the cycle. You will then start ovulation testing on the 11th day of the cycle.

With an irregular cycle, it is better to have a longer period of testing so as not to miss the moment of ovulation. Consult with your treating physician if necessary.

Timing the Self Insemination

It is advisable to start self-insemination 2 days before the expected ovulation and continue until 1 day after the expected ovulation. If you use ovulation tests, you will start inseminating on the day of the positive ovulation test.

You inseminate every other day. Inseminating every day is not necessary because, as explained earlier, sperm can survive for 2-3 days. Inseminating every day could also lead to a drop in sperm quality.

You will inseminate 2 to 3 times per cycle.

Materials

For self-insemination, you will need the following:

- A jar to collect the sperm in;
- A syringe (without needle) to insert the sperm;
- A flexible cannula that you can attach to the syringe.

If your doctor agrees that you can start self-insemination, you can order the materials online.

The jar, syringe and flexible cannula should be clean, dry and not too cold. You can clean the materials with hot water, rinse them with lukewarm water and then air dry them. Do not use soap, this can negatively affect the sperm.

Preparing the Sperm

Your partner collects the semen (by masturbation) directly into the jar. Do not use a condom to collect the sperm. The best sperm quality is obtained after 2 to 3 days of abstinence. Longer abstinence can also adversely affect sperm quality.

You must leave the sperm at room temperature for about 20 minutes (preferably not in the sun). After that, make gentle twisting movements with the jar (swirling) which will make the sperm look a little watery. Suck some air into the syringe, and then suck up all of the sperm

from the jar. You do not need a needle for this. Lastly, attach the flexible cannula to the syringe. The sperm is now ready for insemination.

The Method

Lie down in a comfortable position with a pillow under your hips so that your pelvis is slightly raised. Insert the flexible cannula with the syringe into the vagina and empty it. The sperm will naturally find its way to the uterus and fallopian tubes.

You may remain lying down for 5 to 10 minutes after insemination. When you get up some of the sperm may run out of the vagina, this is quite normal.

If no menstruation has occurred 14 days after ovulation, you can do a pregnancy test.