FERTILITY CLINIC
INFORMATION FOR COUPLES

You and your partner have been referred by your General Practitioner (GP) for a specialist consultation regarding fertility. We encourage you to **attend as a couple for every appointment** because any decisions you make about investigations and treatment will affect both of you. In addition, in order to protect patient confidentiality, we are unable to discuss either partner’s results or sensitive information in their absence and this may delay your treatment. All correspondence between healthcare facilities and personnel will be using your names and ID information and we require written consent for such information sharing. Please bring the attached consent form signed by both partners to the clinic.

**What is Infertility?**
A couple must try for at least 1 year before we start fertility investigations as 75% of couples conceive in the first year of trying, unless there are reasons to start earlier medically. Sadly, if a miscarriage happens then the period of trying starts from that time.

The following factors affect fertility and there may be some things you can do to improve your chances of getting pregnant. The advice given here is in keeping with NICE guidance:

**Woman’s age**
A woman's fertility declines with age. This means that the chances of getting pregnant, both naturally and through fertility treatment, fall as you get older.

**Smoking**
Smoking is likely to reduce fertility in women. Breathing in someone else’s cigarette smoke (passive smoking) is also likely to reduce a woman’s chances of getting pregnant. If you smoke, your GP is able to offer you help to stop if you wish.
For men, there is a link between smoking and poorer semen quality (though the effect of this on fertility is uncertain). Stopping smoking will improve your general health.

**Alcohol**
For women, avoid drinking more than 2 units of alcohol twice per week. In pregnancy, excessive alcohol can harm developing babies.
For men, alcohol consumption within the Department of Health’s recommendations of less than 4 units per day is unlikely to affect their semen quality. However, excessive alcohol intake is detrimental to semen quality.

**Body weight**
The range of healthy weight is defined by the body mass index (BMI). A healthy weight is a BMI of between 19 and 25.
It can take longer to get pregnant if you are underweight (your BMI is under 19) or you are obese (your BMI is 30 or above). If you are underweight or overweight and you have irregular or no periods, reaching a healthy weight will help your ovaries to start working again.
If you are overweight, taking part in a group exercise and diet programme gives you a better chance of getting pregnant than trying to lose weight on your own. Men who have a BMI of 30 or over are likely to have reduced fertility.

How often to have sexual intercourse
To give yourselves the best chance of success, try to have sexual intercourse every 2 to 3 days.

Occupation
At work, some people are exposed to X-rays, pesticides or other things that may affect their fertility. Your GP would ask you about the work that you do, and is able to advise you about any possible risks to your fertility

Over-the-counter and recreational drug use
A number of prescriptions over-the-counter and recreational drugs interfere with male and female fertility and can damage a developing baby. Please speak to your GP if you are using any and get appropriate advice.

Folic acid supplementation
Women who are trying to get pregnant should take folic acid tablets (0.4 mg a day). Taking folic acid when you are trying for a baby and for the first 12 weeks of pregnancy reduces the risk of having a baby with neural tube defects (where parts of the brain or spinal cord do not form properly), such as spina bifida. If you have previously had a child with a neural tube defect, or are taking medication for epilepsy, have diabetes or are overweight (BMI over 30) you should take a larger dose of 5 mg a day (needs a prescription from GP).

Semen testing for men
It is essential to have the results of the semen test when you attend the clinic. We would not start treatment or offer other tests without this. If it is not done at Wexham Park, please obtain a copy of the report from your GP and bring with you to clinic as we can only access our own results.

Tests for women
Women should have a few blood tests done with their GP before their appointment. One is to test your hormone levels on day 2 - 4 of your menstrual cycle and another hormone test to check if you are ovulating, the timing of which will vary depending on how regular your periods are.

You should be offered a test by GP to find out whether you are immune to rubella. If you are not immune you should have a rubella vaccination before you try to become pregnant, because infection with rubella can harm unborn babies. You should avoid pregnancy for 1 month after your rubella vaccination

You should be offered testing for an infection called Chlamydia. Chlamydia can damage your fallopian tubes if it is not diagnosed and treated with antibiotics.

We recommend you to be up-to-date with your cervical smear test. If you are due for one, you should have this test before you try to get pregnant.

NHS criteria for IVF:
IVF treatment is recommended for patients with problems such as tubal blockage, significant male factor or unexplained. Currently, the following criteria should be fulfilled at the time of referral to IVF for NHS funding to be approved: woman should be younger than 35yrs, BMI between 19 and 30, with no previous NHS-funded IVF treatment, no children from current or previous relationship for either partners and no smoking status for both partners for at least six months. Also 2 years of trying from last pregnancy, even if this was a miscarriage.

Finally, we look forward to seeing you in the fertility clinic and it would be helpful if you could bring any previous results from elsewhere that will help in your management.