

Unplanned pregnancy warning to older women over 35

Experts fear older women are ditching contraception in the mistaken belief that they cannot get pregnant past a certain age.

The Family Planning Association (FPA) believes the message on infertility and age has gone "too far".

Although fertility does wane, women can still fall pregnant well into their thirties, forties and even fifties.

Abortion rates for women aged 40 to 44 match those for the under 16s, figures for England and Wales show.

In 2008, both of these groups had an abortion rate of four per 1,000 women.

There are many reasons why some women opt for an abortion - including birth abnormalities in the baby, which are more common when the mothers are older.

But FPA says its anecdotal evidence suggests some of the abortions are because women wrongly assumed they could not get pregnant because they were too old.

Aimed at women aged 35 and over, the FPA's new campaign 'Conceivable?' reminds women to stay vigilant about unplanned pregnancy and to keep using contraception until after the menopause if they do not wish to become pregnant.

Chief executive of the FPA Julie Bentley said: "Whilst the message about fertility declining with age is an important one, it is often overplayed, alongside disproportionate messaging about unplanned teenage pregnancies.

"It sends an inaccurate message to women and society that only the young fall pregnant and is leading older women to believe their fertility has gone long before it actually has."

"Our helpline receives calls from such women, shocked this has happened to them.

"They thought their age would protect them from becoming pregnant."

She said in general all methods of contraception were suitable for the over-35s.

Women aged 30 to 34 continue to have the highest fertility rate - 113.1 live births per 1,000 women.

But the rate among women aged 40 and over has more than doubled since 1988, from 5.1 to 12.6 per 1,000 women, and there were more than 26,000 live births to women in this age group in 2008, figures from the Office for National Statistics show.

(Source: BBC)

Age of mother affects child's autism risk: study

CHICAGO (Reuters) — Being an older mother significantly increases the risk of having a child with autism, but being an older father only increases the risk when the mother is under the age of 30, U.S. researchers said on Monday.

They found that a 40-year-old woman's risk of having a child later diagnosed with autism was 50 percent greater than that of a woman between 25 and 29.

But being an older father -- 40 or older -- only contributes significantly to autism risk when the mother is under 30.

"The older the mother, the more the risk that the child will develop autism, regardless of whether the father is young or old," said Irva Hertz-Picciotto of the University of California Davis MIND Institute, who worked on the study published in the journal Autism Research.

The findings contradict a 2006 study of children born that suggested paternal age played a much larger role.

"There has been a debate over whether it is maternal or paternal risk. A lot of people were thinking it's not really mom's age," Hertz-Picciotto said in a telephone interview.

Researchers and policymakers are increasingly looking for causes to explain the growing numbers of children diagnosed with autism, which affects 1 percent of U.S. children.

There is no cure for autism, a spectrum of diseases ranging from severe and profound inability to communicate and mental retardation to relatively mild symptoms such as with Asperger's syndrome.

The current study, which incorporates data on 4.9 million births and 12,159 autism cases in California, helps to clarify the contribution of age from both parents.



A boy with autism at a treatment center. Women over 40 are nearly twice as likely to give birth to an autistic child than a mother under 30, researchers said in a study that found more evidence of links between autism and maternal age. (AFP/File/Liu Jin)

"We have such a very large database we were really able to disentangle the mother's age very well," Hertz-Picciotto said. This can be a challenge because older mothers and fathers tend to have children together.

"We found it does vary for the father, but not for the mother," she said.

For example, among babies born to mothers under 25, children whose father was over 40 were twice as likely to develop autism as those whose father was between 25 and 29.

This could be because when both parents are older, the risk conferred by the father is outweighed by the risk from the mother, Hertz-Picciotto said.

She said the point of the study is not to blame parents, but to gain clues about what is going on in older parents that could increase a child's risk of developing autism.

Older parents, for example, are more

likely to have infertility problems and have used fertility treatments; the mothers are more likely to have autoimmune conditions, including gestational diabetes; and both have accumulated more toxins over their lifetimes, so the sperm and egg are more likely to have some changes that could increase risk.

"We see these age findings as clues for where to look next," Hertz-Picciotto said.

Autism researchers are looking at a broad range of potential environmental factors, including household products, medical treatments, diet, food supplements and infections.

And the National Institute of Mental Health, one of the National Institutes of Health, is looking at potential genetic causes of autism and has plans to sequence the entire genomes of hundreds of children and their parents to gain a better understanding of the role genes play.

Age for cancer diagnosis reduced to 25 in Iran

Tehran Times Health Desk
TEHRAN — The director of the Iranian Society of Internists has warned of the prevalence of cancer diseases among the Iranians under the age of 25.

"Cancer had been most commonly diagnosed among people aged 50-plus (in 1979); but nowadays, after three decades, there is an increased incidence of cancer in those under 25 years and in some cases 18," Iraj Khosrownia lamented.

Prostate cancer is mostly seen among the Iranian men, and among women breast cancer is most common, Khosrownia explained.

Blaming environmental factors and inborn genetic factors for the spread of cancer among the Iranians, he said, poor nutrition, smoking, and air pollution are the main causes of the cancer in all types.

According to latest official figures, 90 percent of various types of cancers are caused by smoking leading to an earlier death; cancer is responsible for 30 percent of deaths occurred across the country.

Khosrownia described examinations every six months or every year for women as the simple method of detecting cancer at its early stages.

With pancreatic cancer, age factors into familial risk

People with a family member who had pancreatic cancer before age 50 face a greatly increased risk for the disease, a new study has found.

Researchers already knew that people with several relatives diagnosed with pancreatic cancer were more likely than others to develop the disease, but it wasn't clear whether the relatives' age when they got the disease played any role.

They found, though, that risk increased ninefold when just one of several family members with the disease developed it before turning 50.

The finding, published online Jan. 12 in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, stemmed from a review of the medical records of more than 9,000 people in 1,718 families.

The researchers also found that people with multiple relatives with pancreatic cancer were found to have a sixfold higher risk for pancreatic cancer, and chances of developing the cancer doubled if a person had just a single relative with the disease.

(Source: HealthDay News)

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