

# “I went through Four IVF Cycles to have my TWINS!”

*For this fertility doctor, taking a holistic approach to her own IVF was the final way she conceived*

BY JASNITHA NAIR

Fertility expert Dr Natasha Ain was ready to start a family of her own at 27 years old. However, to her surprise, she could not seem to conceive. As a doctor, her first instinct was to get assessed immediately. Multiple fertility tests later, the diagnosis given was unexplained infertility.

While Dr Natasha's medical background helped her to understand her diagnosis, she knew most patients would not have been able to wrap their minds around it.

“Unexplained fertility is a diagnosis on its own. It means that we know there is a problem, but we cannot pinpoint what it is,” she says. “At that moment, I knew that in order for me to conceive, the only way was to undergo an IVF treatment.”





With each IVF cycle came heightened hopes, but Dr Natasha and her husband had to face the constant disappointment of failed IVF rounds for three cycles over three years.

"When I was 35, I thought, maybe this was it. Perhaps I should consider adopting and not go through the heartbreak of a failed IVF cycle again," says Dr Natasha. "Age is a huge factor for IVF success, but I revisited the idea and decided to give it a one last shot."

### A DIFFERENT APPROACH

Fortunately, one of Dr Natasha's closest friends is Dr Helena, a fertility specialist herself. In the book *Catching My Baby Dust*, where both Dr Natasha and Dr Helena share their experiences, Dr Helena admitted there were times when she wanted to tell her friend to give up on IVF and adopt instead, but could not bring herself to do it.

Says Dr Natasha, "Helena suggested that for my final attempt, I try a renowned IVF specialist. My doctor (who later became my boss) had a whole new holistic approach to IVF, involving nutrition, exercising and acupuncture.

"At that point, I decided not to stress about it and just went with the flow. This time around I kept it a secret and did not even tell my mother, as I did not want to feel pressured in any way. Many IVF patients are anxious about getting pregnant and this likely affects the outcome.

"Finally, it was the day of the transfer and my embryologist told me we had three embryos - which was great - but they were all Grade 2. I cried as all my embryos from previous cycles were only Grade 1. Fortunately, two weeks later in November 2010, I became pregnant!

"At six weeks, my husband and I went in for a scan - only to see two tiny dots on the screen. I was expecting twins!

"Zara and Naim are now six years old - and they are already asking if they are going to have more siblings!" **W**



## Dr Agilan Arjunan from the KL Fertility and Gynaecology Centre shares common myths about IVF

### IT IS 100% FAIL-PROOF

"It is true that while IVF can resolve most of the causes of infertility, it is still not a foolproof solution.

"The success rate does depend highly on the underlying problems and the fertility status of the couple, especially the woman.

"A woman below 37 years has a better fertility status compared to a older woman. So it is crucial that patients do not wait too long and turn to IVF as their last resort."

### IT CAN GET COMPLICATED

"IVF is much more patient-friendly and takes a shorter time. Even if the female's work schedule is a problem, the IVF sessions can be broken into two parts.

"The first part is to collect the eggs needed to make the embryos and freeze them. The next step is to put the embryos back in the uterus, according to her availability."

### FEMALES ARE THE PROBLEM

"This has been a misconception for generations. While most of the fertility tests are done on a woman, this does not mean that the female is to be blamed for it. The male partner contributes an equal share to the problem."

### YOU ARE TOO YOUNG

"Tubal blockage can happen in young women due to pelvic infections. Early assessments will catch this. If both tubes are blocked, she would need IVF at a much younger age to heighten her chances of conceiving.

"As for the men, I have been seeing younger men with poor sperm quality. The only way to identify this is by getting an early assessment. I advise the men to come in with their wives and get assessed together."

## COST OF IVF



"Government hospitals charge about RM10,000 while it is about RM15,000 to RM17,000 at private hospitals (it can go up to RM20,000 with extra costs). Look at the institution's success rate first. You may end up paying more for multiple rounds if you go to a place with a better price but a lower success rate."

### When Should I Seek Help?

"For women who are younger than 35 years old, they should seek assistance if they do not fall pregnant after about a year of unprotected sexual intercourse. In some cases, I advise that they seek help earlier if either partners are known to have factors contributing to infertility such as endometriosis or low sperm quality. For women above the age of 35, they should seek for help after six months of trying to conceive," says Dr Agilan.