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The fertilization process and implications of test tube babies

By Dr.Richard Waller

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<http://www.biology-online.org>

Through the wonders of science, infertile couples who were previously unable to bear children, due to reasons such as blocked fallopian tubes, low sperm count, low egg quantities or advanced age of the mother, are now able to conceive through in-vitro fertilization. The results are babies known as test-tube babies which are technically conceived outside the womb.

In a natural scenario, the conception of a baby occurs when the ovum, travels from the ovaries, through the fallopian tube to be fertilized by the sperm of the father during sexual intercourse. >From this point on, the fertilized egg will travel down towards the uterus and during the process division of cells will occur until it reaches its final destination at the wall of the uterus. However, in the cases of block fallopian tubes, the eggs are unable to travel from the ovaries to the uterus and conception cannot happen.

Developed in the United Kingdom by Dr. Patrick Steptoe and Dr. Robert Edwards, the process of in-vitro fertilization involves removing eggs from the ovaries of the mother and combining them with the sperm of the father in a lab environment. The fertilized egg is then placed back into the uterus of the mother after 3 to 5 days and will remain there to grow till birth. Because of the low success pregnancy rate of this procedure, a few eggs are placed in the uterus to increase the odds of success. With this process, statistics have shown that the rates of multiple births have increased where 24 percent of the in-vitro fertilization births have produced twins.

The first test-tube baby, Louise Brown, who was born on the 25th July 1978, marked hope for other infertile couples to have a baby through this procedure. However, many others were concerned about the ethical issues surround this. One major area of concern was the fact that as the egg is located outside the womb for a few days while the cells multiplied before being put back inside the uterus, the health issues affecting this baby is unknown. Indeed, research has been shown that test-tube babies

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have a higher chance of birth defects and low birth weight, and researchers still have not been able to determine the reason for this.

Other issue of concern is that through this procedure, some of the eggs fertilized in the lab are later discarded. Does this procedure mean that the researchers are actually killing potential people? How is the line drawn in this case?

Then there is also the issue of commercial opportunities for eggs and sperms to be bought and surrogate wombs to be rented with the purpose of creating babies. This process of embryo transfer to another mother, not necessarily the same woman who had provided the eggs, is known as placing the embryo in a gestational carrier. This procedure has been becoming increasingly common through technological advancement, which has made couples including women with uterus problems, have a chance in having their baby.

Test-tube babies have really brought changes to the way in which babies are conceived and have given much hope to many who have had problems having babies through the process of . However,

the downside of this are the ethical issues behind the procedure, with which still poses a big question mark and with which is still opposed by many factions. For more details on cell biology please visit

http://www.biology-online.org/tutorials/1_cell_biology.htm

Dr.Richard Waller has been helping thousands of infertile couples and gave hope to childless women since 1999 through the process of in- vitro fertilization. He is based in England.

Prevent Birth Defects With B Vitamin Folic Acid

By Daniel Smith

In recent years, there has been a push from organizations like the March of Dimes and the Centers for Disease Control urging women of childbearing age to make sure they get the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of folic acid, also known as vitamin B9. Women who are actively trying to get pregnant may want to consider a separate folic acid supplement. Folic acid remains important throughout pregnancy and prenatal vitamins will provide a good supply. Studies have shown that adequate levels of folic acid in pregnant women can drastically lower the chances of their babies developing neural tube defects. The neural tube is the part of an embryo and fetus that is the core of the central nervous system, it later develops into the brain and spinal cord.

Neural tube defects develop early in the first trimester, during the first weeks of pregnancy. Many women do not yet know they are pregnant during this time, so waiting until they find out they are pregnant to begin taking folic acid will not have the desired effect. One of the more commonly occurring neural tube defects is spina bifida, when babies are born with part of their spinal cord exposed because the neural tube did not close correctly in development.

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Folic acid is one of the B complex of vitamins. It is present in many foods that are part of an otherwise healthy diet, including green vegetables like spinach, broccoli, and asparagus. It is also found in legumes like black beans and lentils. Some foods, like breakfast cereals and some breads and pastas, are fortified with vitamins, usually including folic acid. In addition to including foods high in folic acid in your diet, it is a good idea to take a vitamin supplement that is either folic acid alone, or a multivitamin that contains folic acid. Generally, advice to take large amounts of vitamins in diet or supplement form has to be tempered against the fact that some vitamins in high levels can be toxic. This is not the case, however, with folic acid. Folic acid can be taken in large amounts and not cause toxicity.

Another plus to folic acid is that it is good for you, as well as your developing baby. Both men and women benefit from folic acid, which helps your body produce healthy red blood cells. Research has shown that folic acid may be beneficial in preventing heart disease, stroke, and colon and breast cancers.

Daniel Smith writes about

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