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TEQUILA
Women &
The Worm

4 WOMEN

Linking Obesity & Infertility

According to the American Obesity Association the prevalence of obesity among reproductive aged women has substantially risen in the last 20 years. Along with the obvious health risks like cardiovascular disease and diabetes, the increase in weight has led to an increase of fertility problems.

Randy Morris, M.D., board certified reproductive endocrinologist and Medical Director of IVFI in Chicago, has seen the percentage of obese women seeking fertility treatment at his center increase from nine percent to 39 percent over the past three years. The percentage with morbid obesity jumped 25 percent. "And that's just in my practice alone," Dr. Morris says.

Obese women have higher incidence of infertility and ovulation problems. "Excess weight and obesity can cause hormonal imbalances that have an impact on ovulation and menstruation," he says. For instance, obese women are much more likely to develop a resistance to insulin, the hormone that normally controls blood pressure. This directly interferes with the ability of a normal egg to develop. Obese patients also have higher miscarriage rates, are at greater risk for developing gestational diabetes and high blood pressure during pregnancy.

Worse, Dr. Morris says, some fertility programs in Illinois won't treat patients over a certain weight in order to avoid negatively affecting their own success rates. "People who would normally not have fertility problems have problems because they are overweight," he says. "We're just concerned that with this society of ours, infertility in general will become more of a problem for this reason alone." ■