

conceive

celebrating the creation of families magazine

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conception in a capsule

A new device may change the face of in-vitro fertilization (IVF). Instead of using laboratory incubators, researchers are now looking at the effectiveness of fertilizing eggs and incubating embryos in a capsule placed inside a woman's vagina. For obvious reasons, a woman's body is the perfect environment for egg fertilization and embryo development.

In this new method, the eggs and sperm are sealed inside a clear, plastic capsule about as thick as a tampon and half as long. The capsule is then inserted in the woman's vagina, where it's held in place with a modified diaphragm. As with a tampon, the device can't be felt once it's in place, and a woman using it doesn't have to curtail her activities in any way. After three days, the capsule is removed and the embryos are transferred to the uterus.

The concept has been tested in the past using a rudimentary form of the device, and success rates were found to be similar to those of standard IVF, according to Randy Morris, M.D., director of IVF1, a Chicago area fertility center that is one of four centers in the country participating in the study.

There are several advantages to the new method. Using the capsule eliminates the need for incubators, which are expensive and must be constantly monitored for temperature, oxygen, and carbon dioxide levels. There's also a psychological benefit. "Patients who have done this have said that they like the fact that fertilization and embryo development is happening inside their body," says Dr. Morris.

Results of the study will be used to obtain FDA approval for the device. For more information, go to: www.IVF1.com.

—Lynn Prowitt-Smith



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