

Is His Biological Clock Ticking?

Recent studies suggest Dad may have just as many reasons as Mom to heed the call of that biological timepiece. The myth of the virile male producing healthy children even in his 50s has been tarnished by studies conducted at New York University School of Medicine, Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons and Israel's Ministry of Health. Apparently, men between the ages of 45 and 49 were twice as likely to have children who developed schizophrenia as men under the age of 25.

"One of the least well-kept secrets in the last 20 years is that age matters," says Dr. Jay Schinfeld, chief of reproductive endocrinology and infertility at Abington Memorial Hospital in Pennsylvania. "It turns out men, starting at age 43, do contribute to chromosomal and other problems."

Infertility, miscarriage and chronic disorders haven't been linked to sperm damage yet, probably because "we don't know if mutated sperm swim as quickly," Dr. Schinfeld says. "Likely, ones that are not swimming are so bad that they won't impregnate."

But you still need to take into account the fact that a man's sperm are healthiest during his 20s.

And if you're getting older and still want children, remember that delayed parenthood is all about retaining healthy sperm by maintaining a healthy lifestyle and minimizing alcohol intake. — GB

The Real Deal for Dads

Does flipping through traditional pregnancy guides put your normally attentive partner to sleep? Does he think most pregnancy books and magazines ignore his unique, male perspective? Then hand him Ian Davis's *My Boys Can Swim: The Official Guys' Guide to Pregnancy*. This short, easy-to-read, laugh-out-loud book will help the expectant father in your life feel included in minor and major pregnancy events like medical tests, name selection, baby showers, birth-preparation classes and, ultimately, the "big day" itself. Davis takes a guy's-eye view as he leads you on a journey through the three trimesters of pregnancy, covering basic topics that seem crystal clear to us women but more like episodes from the *X-Files* to the uninitiated male.

A section on sonograms explains what Dad can expect to see on the monitor. "You'll get a nice black-and-white photo to keep as a memento," writes Davis. "While you and your wife may find this picture highly significant and display it proudly to family and friends, be assured that everyone else will think you're giving them a Rorschach test."

You can find *My Boys Can Swim* online by going to ePregnancy.com, scrolling down the home page to the Go Codes section and entering 8444. — JD

Dads and Doctors: Why He Should Be There

With fewer than half of fathers regularly attending their children's check-ups, there's a pretty good chance your partner will leave your baby's medical care to you. But going to the doctor together isn't just about equal time schlepping Junior to appointments. Well-baby visits help fathers stay up to speed on their child's growth, including upcoming milestones and possible delays. In an emergency, knowing your baby's medical history (like allergies, current medications and immunizations) can also save critical time.

"Both sets of parental eyes are important for monitoring a child's development," says Trevena Moore, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics at St. Louis University School of Medicine and a pediatrician at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital. "One parent may observe a concern that is not necessarily picked up by the other parent."

To get your husband involved in doctor duties during both your prenatal visits and your new baby's checkups, schedule appointments in advance so it's easier for him to take time off work. But if he just can't be there, sit down and write out a list of questions together. Take notes while at the office and share information with him later. Moore also suggests asking the doctor to set up a conference call during the appointment. Hearing health information firsthand will help your husband remember it.

— MW

