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OBESITY CAN BATE FERTILITY, COMPLICATE PREGNANCY

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Q: Can my weight affect my fertility?

A: Infertility is on the rise, mainly because a lot of women are waiting longer to start families. But there are many other factors that influence fertility. According to fertility specialist Dr. Juergen Eisermann, one of them is America's expanding waistline.

Obesity ``can be an ovulation blocker," Eisermann said.

That's part of the reason women who don't shed excess weight gained during their first pregnancy might have trouble conceiving a second pregnancy. And it's not only harder to conceive if you're overweight, but it's harder to carry the baby to term. Studies have shown overweight or obese women are more at risk for gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, even miscarriage. But underweight women can have trouble conceiving also. That fertility problem is a bit easier to fix, Eisermann says.

``The only treatment these people need is to turn into couch potatoes temporarily ! and bring their body mass index back up," he said.

Excess fat can also decrease a man's fertility. Obesity has been shown to lower sperm count. Why? Probably because fat cells produce and store estrogen.

Dr. Sean Kenniff is a neurologist who covers health issues for WFOR CBS-4. The advice in this column is not a substitute for consulting a physician. Reach him at:

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Memo:

ASK DR. SEAN

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