

“We wanted to wait and get established with a house and a bit more financial security behind us before we had kids. But when we started trying to have a family, it just didn’t happen...”

# couples

## Why couples are waiting to start a family

Many people believe they can wait until their late thirties or even their early forties before starting a family and their reasons for delaying parenthood are many and varied.

For some it’s about waiting to find the right person. For others, it’s about pursuing a career or wanting to be more financially independent and secure before they think about babies.

Some worry about the lack of freedom that comes with kids and parenthood, in some couples there’s one partner keen to get on with parenting and the other perhaps not quite so sure, whilst for others, it’s just not a priority right now.

All valid reasons, but what happens when couples in their 30s and 40s decide they do want to take the plunge and become parents?

## Why is the Australian birth rate so low?

Men and women in Australia are having less children than they say they want, even when they only want one or two.

Unfortunately Mother Nature and fertility don’t work to order and some people who desperately want children will end up with none, despite the best medical science in the world.

In fact, one in every six couples will face fertility problems and there isn’t always a clear medical reason why they can’t conceive.

## Why IVF isn’t always the answer

But what about IVF? You always hear about the success stories. Why wouldn’t it work for us as well? The chances of conceiving in an IVF cycle for a healthy woman are highest when she is aged 37 or less.

After that, the success rate declines rapidly with age and at 40 her chances of becoming pregnant depends on a number of factors, including the causes of infertility, her partners age and the type of treatment offered. Precise pregnancy rates should be sought from the treating clinician.

After the age of 40, the chances fall even further. IVF cannot be relied on to achieve a pregnancy.

## The truth about old eggs

Many people do not know that a woman is born with all the eggs she will ever have. Women do not create “fresh” eggs. The older a woman is the less likely she is to produce a healthy embryo.

## What about male fertility?

Men are also affected. Male fertility declines with increasing age and the genetic material in sperm deteriorates with poor lifestyle choices which are associated with an increased risk of miscarriage and birth abnormalities.

## The impact of lifestyle choices

IVF will not overcome poor lifestyle choices in either men or women and factors that play a role in your fertility include:

- > Age and lifestyle
- > Drugs, smoking and excessive alcohol
- > STIs (sexually transmitted infections)
- > Weight and medical history

While Australia has some of the world’s best IVF practices, it can’t turn back the clock, and as couples who’ve gone through IVF will tell you, it is emotionally traumatic.

## What does this mean for me?

Plan to have kids when you’re ready, that’s nobody’s business but yours. But remember that as you get older, the chances of having the children you want decreases and IVF can’t fix everything.

Remember it’s okay to want kids later in life, or perhaps not at all. Just be informed about the facts, so you can make the right decision for you, whatever that is.