

*Women's Health with  
Dr. Minoos Hosseinzadeh*

## Avoiding the Holiday Blues

*Coping with the Holidays  
and Your Infertility*

By Dr. Minoos Hosseinzadeh



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**F**or many, the holidays represent a time of warmth, love and laughter, family and friends. But for those struggling with the life crisis of infertility, they can also be a time of anxiety and emotional stress. An overriding emphasis on children and children's activities during the holidays can serve as an unwelcome reminder that one is experiencing yet another year of infertility – a roadblock on the quest to start a family.

Couples already entrenched in a fertility treatment program may find that it exacerbates an already stressful season. Appointments can begin to seem tedious and time-consuming. The important thing to remember in this situation, as in others, is that it's only natural to feel these things during the holidays. After all, there are trips to be planned, activities to be scheduled, food to cook, presents to wrap and work to be done – who can keep up with it all? The reality is that the season brings stress in different forms, but this stress can be managed with several key coping skills, including:

- Taking a "vacation" from infertility treatment.
- Focusing on the good things.
- Trying to maintain healthy habits, like eating a balanced diet and exercising.
- Using relaxation response training.
- Reconnecting with your partner and learning to communicate and telling your spouse how you need to be helped.
- Make sure you are on the same page as your partner when it comes to making decisions; including how you would like to respond to questions and how much information you want to share about your infertility treatment. When asked, "When are you going to have a baby?" remember that it is okay to reply, "Nine months after we get pregnant!"

### **Insightful "Do's" and "Don'ts" to Help You Through**

Sometimes, in the hustle and bustle of it all, we forget to take care of ourselves. Although it is not always readily apparent, this can augment stress. Treat yourself and your partner to something that will release your tension, taking time out for yoga or a relaxing couple's massage. Be sure to reach out to other childless couples – their parties will be adult-focused. If necessary, shop for gifts online so as to avoid all of the mall madness. And most importantly, stay in touch with others who are experiencing the same thing. They need you the way you need them.

You know your limits – and your body – better than anyone, so don't feel guilty about not participating in traditional family events. Don't feel guilty about being angry or crying. These are natural, human responses to stressful conditions. Rely on your partners and address each other's needs.

### **When to Seek Professional Help**

If you are experiencing feelings of sadness, depression, persistent feelings of worthlessness or guilt during the holidays, you may want to see an infertility counselor or therapist. Likewise, feelings of anger, irritations, agitation and constant worry, thoughts of death or dying, changes in appetite, trouble sleeping or loss of interest and motivation may be signs indicating a need for professional help. Whatever approach you choose, just remember to be aware of your own personal needs and be patient, kind and understanding with your partner. Together you can beat those holiday blues! This column is dedicated to my friend, Jen, and all of the Jens out there. May this help make your holiday season a little easier.

**OC Life Readers: E-mail questions to Women's Health with Dr. Minoos Hosseinzadeh at**  
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