

Procedure Helps Find Healthy Embryos

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Once a woman reaches the age of 35, infertility problems can become more common. Some couples turn to in-vitro-fertilization for help. It doesn't always work the first time, and can become a costly and emotional ride. Now, a new study reveals how PGD, or pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, combined with in-vitro can increase pregnancy success.

"When you utilize PGD their chances of having a successful pregnancy are increased," said reproductive endocrinologist Lawrence B. Werlin, MD.

PGD has been primarily used to look for genetic defects like cystic fibrosis. But now, reproductive endocrinologists say it can also help pick out the healthiest embryo for in-vitro fertilization.

"PGD is looking at whether or not an embryo has too many or not enough chromosomes," Werlin said.

According to a new study led by Werlin, two-thirds of the embryos in many older women don't have the 46 chromosomes needed for a healthy baby. The PGD procedure, which uses special probes to look at the embryo cells under a microscope, can identify whether the embryo is abnormal. Avoiding implanting the abnormal embryos increases a woman's chance of getting pregnant, and helps ensure a chromosomally healthy baby.

Experts say PGD can add about \$3,500 to the cost of in-vitro fertilization and there is a slight risk that the embryo can be damaged by the biopsy.

A new study is about to begin looking at PGD's role in lowering multiple birth rates in the United States by implanting fewer embryos. The study may hold promise for reducing financial and health risks associated with in-vitro fertilization.