

A Pregnancy Aid For Older Women

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NEW YORK (CBS) Once a woman reaches the age of 35, infertility problems can become more common, leading some women to turn to in-vitro-fertilization for help.

But 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 IVF can increase pregnancy success.

When Kelly and Zubair Sheikh's son Joshua was finally born, they were more than thrilled.

"We call him our miracle child, and that's exactly what he is," says Zubair Sheikh.

A miracle, because the Sheikhs spent years trying to get pregnant. Unable to conceive, Kelly's doctor recommended the couple try in-vitro fertilization using PGD.

"When you utilize PGD, their chances of having a successful pregnancy are increased," explains Dr. Lawrence Werlin.

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," Dr. Werlin says.

According to a new study led by Dr. 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.

"By testing the embryos when IVF is done, we know that we can put back normal embryos back into the uterus," says Dr. John Schnorr.

Avoiding implanting the abnormal embryos increases a woman's chance of getting pregnant and helps ensure a chromosomally healthy baby. It's a process that made Kelly's dream come true.

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 IVF.

After doctors fertilize a woman's eggs with sperm in a lab, the fertilized eggs develop into embryos, then doctors biopsy, or take cells from the embryos to perform the PGD test.

Kelly Sheikh also had another baby, a girl, without any help from in-vitro fertilization.

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