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## Overcoming Infertility

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**By Bryna Jean-Marie**  
**Photography by Sumner Dilworth**

*If 40 is the new 30, then 30 should be the new 20. However, most women's biological clocks are still ticking to the same beat they did in the 1950s. And fellas, before you flip this page, fertility isn't a slam dunk for you either. No matter who has the physical challenge, both share the emotional one. Thankfully, reproductive medicine has come a long way.*

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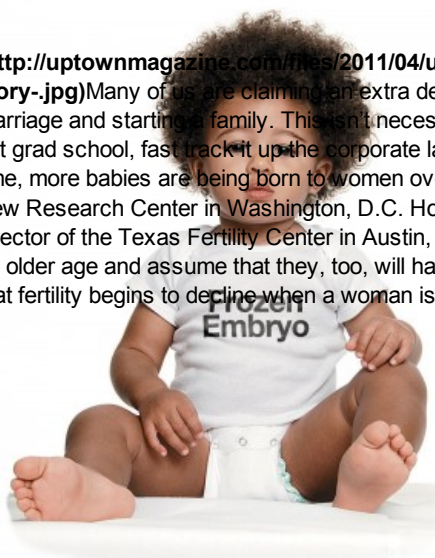
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(<http://uptownmagazine.com/files/2011/04/uptown-magazine-overcoming-infertility-story-.jpg>) Many of us are claiming an extra decade to focus on ourselves before we consider marriage and starting a family. This isn't necessarily a bad thing—often this time is used to knock out grad school, fast track it up the corporate ladder, or become financially solvent. For the first time, more babies are being born to women over the age of 35 than to teenagers, according to the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C. However, says Dr. Thomas Vaughn, founder and director of the Texas Fertility Center in Austin, “Patients read about women becoming pregnant at an older age and assume that they, too, will have no problems conceiving. Couples do not realize that fertility begins to decline when a woman is in her early thirties.” Thankfully, couples do have options when their biological clock is thumping.



A couple is considered to have fertility problems when they have been sexually active for one year without using any contraception and has been trying unsuccessfully to get pregnant. (It is recommended that couples seek help after six months of trying if the woman is over 35.) According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the total percentage of affected women, including those who are unable to carry a

baby to term, is virtually the same between black and white women. But when it comes to using alternative methods of conception, the roads begin to part.

Health scientists are still piecing together the reasons why more fertility challenged African-Americans are not undergoing in vitro fertilization (IVF) or considering surrogacy or egg donation. Contrary to popular belief, preliminary studies indicate that money may not always be the top deterrent. Religious beliefs and other factors often play a significant role.

For those trying to make it happen by any means necessary, there are options—and an exhaustive amount of material and research to sift through. The Watleys believed in miracles—and IVF proved to be theirs.



(<http://uptownmagazine.com/files/2011/04/uptown-magazine-overcoming-infertility-shawna-matthew-watley.jpg>) **IVF: SHE'S A GOOD EGG**

After their dream wedding in 2006, Shawna Watley, then 37, and Matthew Watley, then 33, were eager to start their family. However, after a year of unsuccessfully trying to conceive, Shawna's ob-gyn informed the couple that fibroids and a shortage of viable eggs were most likely the cause of their problem. “[A fertility specialist] told us that there was zero chance,” says Shawna, a senior lobbyist for the law firm Holland & Knight in Washington, D.C. “It was our choice to keep trying. Given our trust in God, we were willing to step forward in faith.”



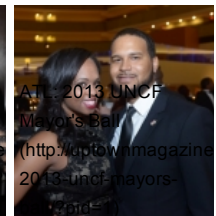
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