

■ JoAnn Krivetzky, MD  
OB/GYN



■ Stephen Mooney, MD  
Reproductive Endocrinology

## Are You in Menopause?

Hot flashes ... night sweats ... mood swings and changes in the menstrual cycle are some of the first signs of menopause. It is a normal part of a woman's life so women often compare experiences, but Dr. JoAnn Krivetzky doesn't want you to fall prey to menopause misconceptions.

Menopause begins at different times for different women, though the average age of menopause is around age 51.

"Commonly, women are unsure about menopause and often enter this phase of life with much trepidation," said the veteran gynecologist who is also the chair of obstetrics/gynecology at Aultman Hospital. "The degree of symptoms varies from woman to woman."

She encourages women to approach menopause with a positive attitude. "Embracing menopause is important as a woman will spend approximately one third of her life in post-menopause."

Krivetzky also encourages open communication so loved ones can be more understanding as changes occur. "For example, some women feel tired because their sleep has been interrupted. Sleep deprivation can affect the whole family," she said.

Symptom severity related to menopause varies among women.

"Some women find that their symptoms are tolerable with simple self-management tips and gradually resolve themselves over time; others find their symptoms very uncomfortable," she said. "If menopausal symptoms are disruptive and intolerable, your physician can help you better manage them."

Treatment options include lifestyle changes, hormonal and non-hormonal medications, biofeedback and counseling.

Women should also be aware that hormonal decline occurring with menopause affects the cardiovascular system and bone health.

"There is an increased incidence of bone loss and increased risk of cardiovascular disease (heart attack and stroke) once a woman achieves menopause," Krivetzky said.

The first few years of menopause are marked by rapid bone loss, which creates a greater risk of osteoporosis. In addition, weight, blood pressure and lipid/cholesterol levels can all be affected by decreasing estrogen in menopause, which potentiates the increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Krivetzky recommends that women discuss these issues with their primary care and gynecologic physicians at their routine annual exams.

Go to the American College of Obstetrics/Gynecology's patient website for additional information: <http://pause.acog.org>.

### SIGNS OF MENOPAUSE

- Absence of a period for one full year
- Hot flashes
- Night sweats
- Mood swings and irritability
- Sleep disturbances
- Cognitive changes: losing focus/train of thought and poor concentration
- Vaginal dryness
- Vaginal/vulvar itching
- Skin dryness

### COPING WITH MENOPAUSE

- Limit caffeine intake
- Develop a regular sleep pattern
- Exercise regularly
- Consume a heart-healthy diet
- Dress in layers
- Talk to your primary care physician or gynecologist for treatment of life-disrupting symptoms

## LADIES: LEARN YOUR HEART ATTACK SIGNS

Aultman's Dr. Patricia Rubin, the only female board-certified cardiologist in Stark County, wants all ladies to know how their hearts differ from a man's heart.

"It's an important issue because cardiovascular disease, including heart attacks, kills more American women than the next five leading causes of death combined, including breast cancer," she said.

Symptoms of heart attack are different for men and women. According to Rubin, men may complain more of an "elephant sitting on their chest," while women experience much more subtle symptoms, such as:

- Pain in the jaw, neck or between shoulder blades
- Shortness of breath
- Indigestion
- Fatigue

"If a woman has the feeling that something is not right or doesn't have the energy she used to, she may be suffering from cardiovascular disease and having a silent heart attack," said Rubin.

Rubin advises patients to call their doctor when experiencing new pain or pain lasting longer than 5 minutes. "Better safe than sorry," she said.

# UNDERSTANDING FERTILITY

Difficulty getting pregnant is on the minds of 7 million American women, but it's not just a woman's problem; both men and women can have problems that cause infertility

According to Reproductive Endocrinologist Stephen Mooney, MD, it's a very stressful, emotionally charged experience that about 15-20 percent of couples face.

For many responsible couples, this is the one thing in life they can't control, so it's very frustrating, he says. "Many have delayed child bearing in order to pursue educational or career goals and then realize that conception doesn't always come easily."

His best advice is to relax; let it happen; seek help when you are ready, and do not make assumptions.

"Many couples automatically rule out seeing a fertility specialist for one of many reasons," said the partner of Reproductive Gynecology Inc., who has offices in Akron and in Aultman's Physician Office Building in Canton.

"For some, it is denial of a problem, personal finances and perception that insurance doesn't cover anything or maybe even the risk of multiple births," he said.

The desire to have a child can overwhelm the life of a couple experiencing conception problems. "They often find it hard to find balance in their lives," he said. "It's a very important aspect of your life, so find a physician you trust to guide you through it."

According to Mooney, a couple that is very motivated to be diagnosed and conceive can undergo a consultation and thorough clinical exam with results in about one month.

"Personalized recommendations are then made based on the couple's problems. Treatment times and expenses can be determined at that time. Few couples actually need in vitro fertilization, which is the most costly."

Again, Mooney stresses making a call to your insurance company or letting the financial counselors in his office call. "We've seen medical coverage from 100 percent to none. Most people do have some coverage, and it almost always covers the consultation and diagnostic work."

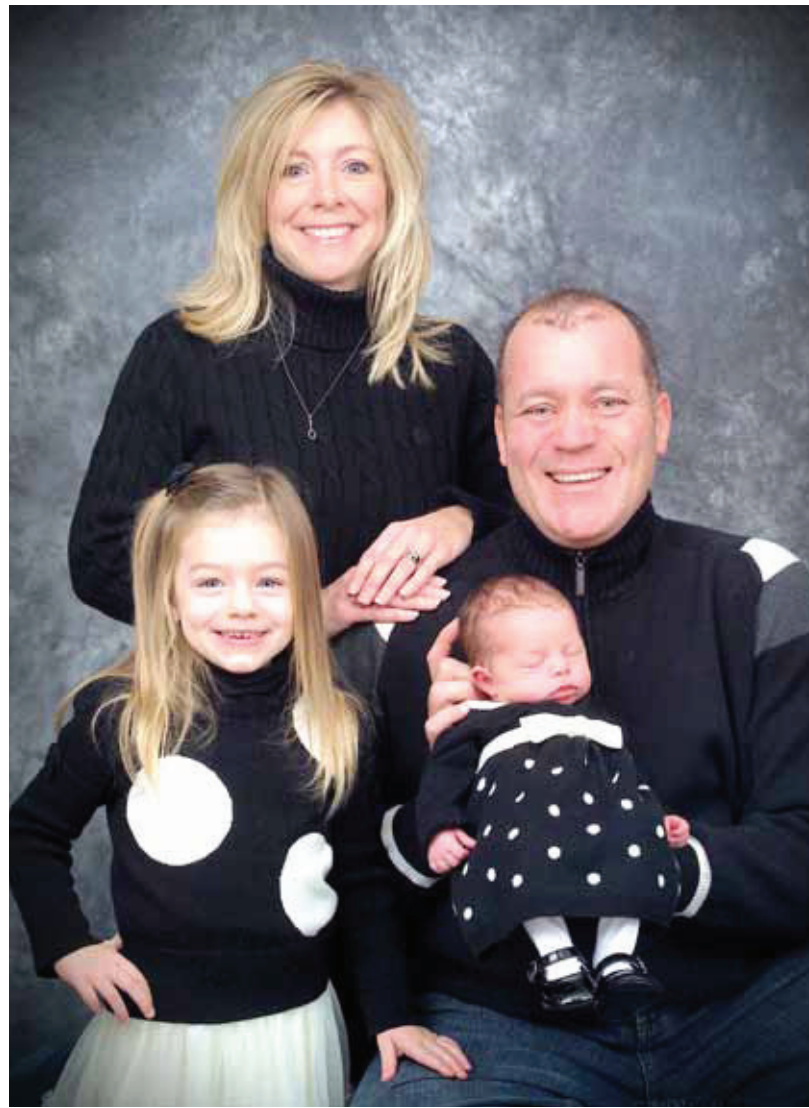
### CAUSES OF INFERTILITY

Many women are waiting to have children until their 30s and 40s. In fact, about 20 percent of American women now have their first child after age 35. So age is a growing cause of fertility problems.

Infertility means not being able to get pregnant after 12 months of unprotected intercourse (three times a week), or six months if a woman is 35 or older. Mooney says, "It's perfectly OK to come in sooner if you want or need reassurance because of family history or other medical problems."

The most common causes of infertility that Mooney sees in his practice are problems with:

**Female ovulation:** an irregular or absent menstrual period is a sign. This can be caused by polycystic



■ With the assistance of fertility treatments, Canton residents Deb and Blake Fearon feel very blessed to have two healthy, happy daughters: Haylee and Makenzie.

### REPEAT CLIENTS

Deb and Blake Fearon got married in their mid-30s so they learned the hard way that getting pregnant at that age can be a very complicated thing. "Things just don't happen naturally as you get older," Deb said.

With the assistance of Dr. Stephen Mooney, a reproductive endocrinologist, they overcame unexplained infertility and have been blessed with two healthy daughters. Haylee, who is 3.5 years old, was conceived after the first artificial insemination procedure. But the Canton couple was not that lucky with conception of their second baby.

"It took more than a year of different medications and procedures to get pregnant with Makenzie," she said. "Kids are a blessing. Fertility treatment gave us the opportunity to experience this miracle."

Although it's an emotional roller coaster, the couple advises those suspecting infertility to talk with a doctor and learn their options. "The longer you wait to talk to someone, the more frustrated you get," Deb said.

ovarian syndrome or primary ovarian insufficiency.

**Male system:** most often caused by the number, shape or movement of the sperm.

**Female pelvic:** endometriosis, fibroids and adhesions can all cause infertility problems.

The cause of infertility is not clear for about 20 percent of couples.

Mooney suggests they can increase their chances of conception by:

- Getting adequate sleep (7-8 hours a night)
- No or moderate alcohol consumption
- No smoking
- Balanced diet as recommended by USDA food pyramid
- Reducing stress

To reduce stress, Mooney suggests gaining insight on your

stress triggers and devising strategies to deal with stress. "Sometimes recognizing there is a problem is the hardest part of addressing it."

He has had several patients conceive after getting their weight and stress under control. Counseling, acupuncture and exercises like yoga and Pilates are popular methods.

### LEARNING MORE

The Internet is always helpful to learn more, but Mooney warns couples to use that information in conjunction with the advice of their physician.

Good online resources with dozens of fact sheets and educational videos are the American Society for Reproductive Medicine ([asm.org](http://asm.org)) and reproductivefacts.org) and RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association ([resolve.org](http://resolve.org)), which offers emotional support, too.

## ACHIEVE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AT ANY AGE

Join Aultman's **Wellness on Wheels (WOW)** nurses at one of three **Curves fitness club** locations this month for free health screenings and education, as well as a **30-day complimentary membership**.

Monday, May 16 2-4 p.m.	Monday, May 23 3-5 p.m.	Wednesday, May 25 9 a.m. - noon
Curves	Curves	Curves
1178 Alliance Road N.W. Minerva	7924 Hills & Dales Road N.E., Massillon	6304-A Market Ave. N. North Canton/Plain Twp.

Basic health screenings include: blood pressure, body mass index, weight, height as well as hip and waist measurements. Information on blood pressure, weight management, healthy eating and healthy choices will also be shared by an Aultman nurse.

**Aultman Weight Management** is an excellent resource for those wanting a structured program. Experts in nutrition, exercise and behavior modification help patients lose 2-5 pounds a week depending on the program they choose. Call 330-491-1670 to learn how.

### Suggested Screenings

Regular physical exams and health screenings are an important part of preventive care at every age. Early detection is often the key to successful treatment.

Based on your age as well as personal and family medical history, your primary care physician will offer a customized screening schedule. Use this as a general guide.

- **General health:** weight, skin/moles and tobacco/alcohol use
- **Heart health:** blood pressure and cholesterol
- **Breast health:** mammography and clinical exam
- **Reproductive health:** pap, pelvic and sexually transmitted infections
- **Sensory health:** eye and hearing
- **Behavioral health**
- **Other areas of common concern:** oral health, bone health, diabetes, thyroid testing, colorectal health and infectious disease

For a complete list with recommended ages, go to [aultman.org/women](http://aultman.org/women).



## NURSES' WEEK/ WOMEN'S HEALTH

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