kindbody

Fertility & the Black Experience



As a group, persons of African descent experience disparities with chronic conditions, access to care, preventive screenings, and mental health, with fertility and reproductive health being among these conditions.

“ Representation Matters

It is statistically proven that in healthcare, patients of color have better outcomes when treated by a doctor of color. I am both humbled and proud to represent a small yet powerful number of Black female physicians. Representation in healthcare goes beyond comfort but can save lives and improve results for patients of color.

— Dr. Janelle Jackman

Clinical Disparities in Infertility

Studies have shown Black women are 2x more likely to experience infertility than white women. And, when Black women attain access to reproductive treatments they experience lower success rates compared to their White counterparts. **Poor outcomes are disproportionately seen in Black women seeking fertility care:**

- Lower implantation rates
- Lower clinical pregnancy rates
- Increased miscarriage rates

Biological Risk Factors

Fibroids are benign growths of the smooth muscle cells in the wall of the uterus.

- Uterine fibroids affect 20-50% of reproductive age women, and they tend to disproportionately affect Black women.
- It’s unclear why Black women are at greater risk for uterine fibroids, but most present for care at a later stage of development.
- This can have detrimental effects on reproductive outcomes (i.e. increased risk of miscarriages and preterm labor/delivery).

Endometriosis is the most common cause of pelvic pain and occurs in 20-25% of women with infertility.

- Endometriosis is an often painful disorder in which tissue that normally lines the inside of the uterus grows outside the uterus.
- While the current thinking is that endometriosis does not commonly affect Black women, studies on the prevalence of endometriosis among Black women are still lacking.

PCOS can negatively impact fertility due to an overproduction of androgens by the ovaries.

- PCOS is the most common endocrine disorder in women that affects 5-15% of reproductive age women.
- PCOS is characterized by irregular periods, blood or clinical signs of excess androgen production, and/or polycystic appearing ovaries.

Mental health and stress can also affect fertility.

- Infertility itself may cause a person to feel stigmatized, contributing to anxiety and depression and further negatively impacting fertility.



Socioeconomic Barriers and How to Overcome Them

Healthcare disparities in minority populations are not new, but more awareness of this issue continues to be brought to our attention.

Health Literacy and Care Disparities

Delay in family building

- Personal preference
- Focus on career-building, higher education

Delay in seeking infertility services

- Religious beliefs
- Cultural barriers
- Not seeing representation in your care providers

Misconceptions and misinformation

- Government services are designed to reduce fertility in poor minority women, not improve it
- Depictions of Black women as being highly fertile not infertile

8% of Black women will seek help getting pregnant compared to 15% of white women

- Access to care is not always convenient and affordable for Black women and minorities.
- A cultural emphasis on privacy and a stigma associated with infertility inhibit women from proactively seeking advice.

What Can We Do to Improve?

Address the education gap

- Kindbody champions education re: misconceptions and misbeliefs around Black women and fertility.

Diverse providers

- Address lack of diversity in the fertility space and how we fill in those gaps.

Destigmatize and normalize

- Highlight and advocate for disparities among people of color. Bring forward journeys and stories.

Empower and enable

- Empower Black and minority individuals to take control of their reproductive health and be their own advocates for their care.