



EGG TIMER TESTS AND ANTI MULLERIAN HORMONE (AMH)

Egg timer tests and Anti-Mullerian Hormone (AMH) have recently received media attention and generated public interest in the diagnosis and treatment of infertility. It has been proposed in the media that the results of an egg timer test may provide an indication of a woman's present and future fertility, thus allowing her to make a more informed decision regarding starting a family.

An egg timer test involves considering a combination of the woman's age, the base level of FSH hormone, a count of the number of follicles in the ovaries by ultrasound and AMH levels. Therefore the AMH level is one of four factors considered in the egg timer test.

AMH.

In women, AMH is produced by immature egg follicles in the ovaries. AMH levels thus reflect the remaining number of follicles in the ovaries and AMH levels will decrease with ageing of the ovary as a result of the normal loss of these follicles each menstrual cycle. Therefore, a higher level of AMH indicates more egg follicles available for future cycles and therefore a likelihood of a greater chance of achieving a pregnancy than if the level of AMH was lower. AMH can be tested at any time of the menstrual cycle using a blood test available from routine pathology centres, and has been available in Australia for a number of years.

"EGG TIMER" TESTING.

Currently there is no test to determine which egg or embryo will generate a live pregnancy and lay publications often incorrectly report an egg timer test as a predictor of future pregnancy. Infertility is a complex condition affected by a number of factors in addition to the four covered by the egg timer test and at present there is no test which can be used to predict current or future fertility with any degree of reliability.

SUMMARY.

Infertility as a result of advancing female age is one of the most important and common problems facing both patients and clinicians today. It is understandable that patients would like to be able to predict their current and future fertility by the use of a reliable test, to enable them to make a more informed decision regarding delaying parenthood. However, it should be realised that the use of the egg timer test and AMH levels have limited effectiveness, and are not accurate enough to plan for deferring conception.