



From Dr A Majid Katme

Career women turn to IVF in record numbers as number of females over 40 seeking treatment rises 500%

Record numbers of older career women are having IVF treatment in an attempt to become mothers.

Over the past 20 years, the number of IVF cycles undertaken by women in their forties has increased by more than 500 per cent – the biggest increase of any age group.

While in 1992 the over 40s had just 2,066 IVF treatments, by 2010 that number had soared to 10,979.



Women over 40 are not entitled to IVF on the NHS so are turning to private clinics to help them have children. The figures from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority show one of the biggest rises was among 42-year-old women – where there was a six-fold increase from 300 to 1,839 over the same period.

Even bigger increases were seen in women in their late forties – aged 47 and 48 – with up to eight times more IVF carried out.

Doctors say working women who put off having a family to pursue a career are largely responsible for the massive increase.

But last night experts warned that doctors cannot turn back the fertility clock.

While advances in technology mean the chance of conceiving a baby in your forties through IVF has increased by 50 per cent in some clinics, the actual number of women taking home a baby is still very small.

Just 12 per cent of women aged 40 to 42 who have IVF using their own eggs end up with a baby, and only 1.5 per cent of those aged 45 and above.



The numbers of woman over 40 wanting to get pregnant via IVF has increased substantially. Women over 40 are not entitled to NHS funding for IVF treatment. Professor Richard Fleming, scientific director of the Glasgow Centre for Reproductive Medicine, said: 'It is very clear that the decline in fertility starts much earlier than most adults seem to realise, around the age of 31.'

'Women who delay having children are playing Russian roulette with their chance of having a baby.'

'Yet most people don't realise they are making that choice by delaying having children.' Dr Simon Fishel, managing director of the CARE fertility clinics, urged women in their early 30s to consider freezing their eggs.

'If you are a 32-year-old woman, are not in a relationship or don't want to have children for another five years, freezing your eggs is a good option,' he said. 'Having a baby aged 39, using your own eggs from when you were 32, will make a huge difference to the chance of IVF being successful.'

More than 45,000 British women a year have IVF treatment. Studies estimate that 10 per cent of all children will be born through IVF in Europe by 2020.

Seven per cent of Danish children are IVF babies and 9 per cent of Israeli babies. In the UK, the rate is less than 2 per cent.