

BABIES

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for it. If physical examination and simple tests on the husband show he is normal, the wife will undergo a diagnostic survey.

Treatment depends on the diagnosis. For husbands, an operation may be necessary or he may need only a corrective diet, rest, exercise, vitamins, a thyroid extract, or cutting down on drinking and smoking. Recently developed drugs to curb mental depression may also help restore male fertility.

For women, treatments are as varied as the possible causes. They may be placed on special diets. Infections are cleared up. When the problem is psychological, the couple may be referred to a psychiatrist. But since the major causes of sterility are physical in nature, its conquest is apt to depend on medical advances such as the hormone pills.

NOT EVERY barren couple can be helped. No drug discovered thus far is a sure cure for sterility. Persons with congenital defects—those born without the means for reproduction—should not expect miracles. Nor can a woman who has had a pelvic disease requiring removal of organs look forward to motherhood. But in other cases, most young childless couples have as much as a 50-50 chance today.

Persistency often pays off. Consider, for example, the case of Mrs. Ann Forster, 34, of Trenton, N.J. During her 12 years of marriage, she suffered eight miscarriages, each time losing her baby before the third month.

"I was discouraged, of course," she says, "and I felt awful that I couldn't bear my husband a child. But Bob and I didn't brood. We kept hoping and trying to find an answer. I took dozens of tests, my thyroid was checked and all that. Still nothing happened. Finally a new obstetrician I went to gave me hormone injections—and last January our baby was born!"

"With our Betty, a whole new world has opened up to us. Sometimes, when we're watching tv in the evening and we hear Betty making sounds in her crib, I say to Bob, 'Gee, she's really ours!' We thank God many times for answering our prayers."

Thus it's evident that, in the light of medical progress, a childless couple need not give up all hope. Here are vital pointers for would-be parents as recommended by leading infertility specialists:

1. You should start to be concerned when pregnancy has not occurred after one year of normal relations.
2. Don't delay in seeking medical advice. One study showed that among women who sought help after one

year of infertility, 42 percent became pregnant; of those who waited 10 years, only 22 percent succeeded. The highest fertility rate in women is between the ages of 20 and 25; after that, it gradually declines.

3. Remember that early recognition of any physical defect may prevent further damage. Later, it may be beyond repair. Wives who have a serious menstrual disturbance especially should seek medical help early.

4. Be patient. A full diagnostic study of wife and husband may take six months, and treatment as long as a year or more.
5. If your family doctor is not equipped to give a complete diagnostic

study, he should refer you to a competent infertility specialist. If you can't afford a specialist's fees, go to the nearest university hospital or get the address of the nearest fertility clinic by writing to: American Society

for the Study of Sterility, 944 S. 18th St., Birmingham 5, Ala.

By taking decisive steps, couples thwarted in their natural desire for children may see their hopes happily fulfilled in the miracle of birth.

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I was just thinking...

MY OASIS is surrounded by the shifting sands of do-it-yourselfers.

The Garbers, who built their own beautiful contemporary redwood house, fail to disturb my calm. That's because it would be as easy for me to construct a gantry out of bobby pins.

But Mr. Garber in the garden is another matter entirely. He and the Christensens, the Troutners, the Davises, and others of their industrious ilk are ruining my summer.

When I pitched my tent here last winter, the neighborhood was as deserted as a desert. No footstep marred the snow, no ice-laden shrub was touched by human hand. It was pure wide-screen paradise in glorious black and white.

Now that summer is at hand, it's a technicolor stampede.

First, Mr. Garber grabbed a rake and attacked the leaves. Then Mr. Troutner tackled the rosebushes with a two-edged sword. Mrs. Davis donned battle regalia and waded in on the weeds. Mrs. Christensen is conducting grub warfare.

FROM MY TENT, I survey this massive onslaught with grave misgivings. There are dead leaves in my bushes, dead stalks in my flower beds. A lilac at the corner of the house has infiltrated the evergreens, and the weeping willow sobs its twigs all over the back yard. I am surrounded by the roar of mowers, the whisper of hoes, the boom of axes, and a rat-tat-tat of rakes.

In my comfortable hammock, I can see Mr. Grooters making contact with Mrs. Kercheval across the fence. There is a murmur of something that sounded like "blight on the neighborhood." I'm not sure whether this means me or my lawn. Or both.

So, from my beleaguered position, I wish to issue the following communiqué: I have sent for reinforcements. Tomorrow mine will be the neatest headquarters in the area. Who can quarrel with a neighbor reposing in a hammock on a lawn 100 feet wide, 200 feet long, and composed entirely of bright green cement?

Patty Johnson

