



NZ Early Menopause Support Group
www.earlymenopause.org.nz
nzem.info@nzord.org.nz

NZEMail

March 2010



Hi and welcome...

... to our latest newsletter. I hope 2010 is being good to you so far.

POF/early menopause is a very hard diagnosis to come to terms with and in this issue I've included an article suggesting ways of coping with devastation in your life. Then IVF, for some, is an added stress, so I've written a bit about my experience with some sources of extra support that I hope you find helpful.

New this month is a 'What's On Guide' on the back page. If you know of something you think should be in it, please let me know.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our weekend away in Rotorua in June. It's going to be great!

Nicole x

Getting together

National gathering

So, who's after a fun weekend away, some pampering and some bonding with women who understand what you're going through? Who isn't?! We'll be meeting in Rotorua over Queen's Birthday weekend: June 5-7. We now have 17 people definitely interested, including one Aussie! Planning is going really well: we have some great goodie bags for you, four very keen speakers, and we've also been promised some money which will really help with keeping the costs down. However, I'm on the lookout for more help, so if you know anyone who may be able to donate money or product/merchandise to us please let me know!

If you'd like to have a smaller meeting in your area to get to know some other members before the big event, let me know and I'll do what I can to help.

Group news

New members

We've had four more ladies contact the group since our last newsletter and two of them have been very brave and posted a bit about themselves on our forum.

'[Quirky](#)' had a terrible time when she was delivered her diagnosis over the phone early this year and I'm sure she'd love to hear from group members. Even if it's just to say hi, it can help just knowing you're not alone.

'[Scoochy](#)' has recently had a baby through egg donation and is struggling a bit with her hormones. If you can identify with a bit of her story, I'm sure she'd love to hear from you, too.

DE IVF News

Three of our members are currently living the dream so many of us have – success with donor egg IVF. A wee boy was born in October, and two others are due later in the year. Congratulations, ladies! This is wonderful news and proves that it can and does work.

I don't mean to upset anyone who, like me, hasn't had success in this area; I simply want to share good news when I can as it can be encouraging to others going through it.

However, I do know it can be very difficult coming to terms with needing fertility treatment and dealing with the stress involved. In [our library](#) we have a book called "Taking Charge of your Infertility" and it has some great coping strategies. One of my favourites is: become informed. This has helped me no end both with POF and IVF. The authors suggest: "Far from being categorised as an obsession, this is an intelligent response to a new challenge that better equips you to work within the medical system."

When DH and I were going through IVF, things always seemed to go more

smoothly for me when I felt 'clued up' about the process. Sadly, we have decided that IVF is no longer an option for us. We've had our two government-funded cycles with two very special girlfriends but the time has come for us to move on. We've asked if Fertility Associates will consider including donor egg IVF in their [Fertility Cover](#) programme, but they've decided against. I don't know if their position might change in the future, but I can definitely see how it would be a lot trickier to tie down all the fine details with a third party involved. Apparently we were the first couple to ask about it.

So, no Fertility Cover means no safety net should we be unsuccessful again, and emotionally and financially we're not in a position to go in so unprotected. The gamble simply isn't worth it for us. It's a sad time, but in a way I'm pleased we were left with so few options as it has made the decision a lot easier. We're looking into adoption, but it's hard to get excited about that option from where we're standing at the moment.

Coping with the grief of infertility was covered at the Fertility NZ Conference last June and, if you'd like to read about the strategies suggested, you can find my fairly comprehensive notes on that [on their website](#) or on our forum. I know I mention this a lot, but it really helped me to understand it better.

NZ Herald

I was contacted by the NZ Herald in February about advertising in their 'My Generation' publication. Apparently in the March issue there'll be an 'editorial' on Menopause. I turned down the advertising but contacted the editor to see if she could include the 'early menopause' experience in her article. She didn't promise anything, but she requested some information and said she'd do what she could. It will be out on Monday 15th, so do grab a copy and see if she's managed to incorporate our experience into the article.



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Local news

Fertility NZ www.fertilitynz.org.nz

Fertility Feedback

The meeting with Fertility Associates Auckland went very well and an FNZ committee member will have regular meetings with all the Auckland clinics to keep the communication flowing. The clinics can share new initiatives with FNZ, and FNZ will remind the clinics about how their patients are faring.

To begin that feedback to the clinics, FNZ has devised a questionnaire that asks for patient experiences in the areas of information; communication; service; support; and there's room for suggestions, too. If you'd like to take part (anonymously if you wish) let me know and I'll email the questionnaire to you.

Contact Groups

FNZ contact group meetings happen all round the country. They are a place where people dealing with all kinds of fertility issues can meet others. More information is in our What's On Guide on the back page of this newsletter.

New National Support Group

A FertilityNZ member has kindly offered to start a support group for people who have not been able to realise their dream of having a baby.

She is offering the opportunity to share experiences of having gone through fertility treatment and failed and still having happy lives with positive outlooks.

Please email support@fertilitynz.org.nz if you would like to get in touch with the group organiser, and further contact details will be provided.

Media Enquiry

A TVNZ current affairs reporter contacted FNZ recently.

She is researching a story about fertility issues. She'd like to hear from anyone who's willing to share their story, especially in the experiences women have had with natural fertility practitioners and fertility clinics – both good and bad!

At this stage, she's only looking to have an initial confidential chat via email.

Her email address is:

libby.middlebrook@tvnz.co.nz

Pathways Newsletter

This publication is now available for anyone to download for free from the [FNZ website](#). It is always full of helpful information and good avenues of support.

Book Sale

FNZ is selling a selection of books from their library for a \$5 or \$10 donation (plus \$3.00 postage fee).

The booklist can be found [here](#).

Last time I looked they had a copy of the Premature Menopause Book which I've found to be a great resource and I find myself dipping in and out of it at various times.

If you'd like to buy a book, simply send a self addressed envelope with the title of the book(s), and the required donation to FertilityNZ, PO Box 12049, Beckenham, Christchurch 8242. (But you might want to check they still have it first!)

Donor Conception Network

The new DCN support groups in North Shore Auckland and Canterbury are now having contacts come forward. If you are in these areas – do make contact for your local group to grow.

We would like to see groups established all around New Zealand enabling support for all families created by donor.

Please use the email address below if you would like to be a contact person for a DCN group in your area:

donorconception@fertilitynz.org.nz

Free Fertility Information Seminar – Auckland, Tues March 30

Novotel Ellerslie – Rimu 3 Room, Greenlane East, Ellerslie, 7pm – 8.30pm

This free seminar aims to provide information and options to anyone experiencing difficulties in achieving pregnancy. We will have a Fertility Associates doctor, nurse, embryologist, and counsellor presenting, plus a representative from Fertility New Zealand and our public funding co-ordinator available to answer questions. Topics covered include causes of infertility, options for treatment, the IVF experience, counselling and support.

Light refreshments and snacks will be served.

Plenty of free parking is available close to the venue.

Please email us on events@fertilityassociates.co.nz if you would like to come along, so we make sure we have your seat and information pack ready.



International news

New Australian Support Network

Just last week, I was contacted by Tanya Dickson in Australia who has recognised the need for a support network over there and is doing all she can to set one up.

She has contacts with the Jean Hailes Foundation and I've given her some other suggestions to establish contact with health professionals and patients. She is looking into setting up a website to attract members and is very excited about this project.

I know some of our members live in Australia, so if any of you would like to get in touch with her just to say hi or to help her with contacts and other ideas, I'm sure she'd love to hear from you. Her email address is:
earlymenopause@yahoo.com.

AMS www.menopause.org.au

Staying in Australia, the Australasian Menopause Society's annual conference in September is going to include a session on early menopause – psychological consequences, clinical consequences and fertility issues. So I'll be very interested to know what is said.

Is anyone planning a trip to Sydney around Sep 26? Fancy popping along to a conference while you're there? ☺

POF Awareness campaign

www.HopeForPOF.com

Andrew Shelling at Auckland University told me about this website over the weekend. It seems to be another campaign being run in the US to increase awareness of, and improve treatment and find a cure for POF. The leading advocate has prepared a

document which "expresses my thoughts about the current state of POF/POI and describes several ideas that I believe can lead to a better future for patients that suffer from this condition." Pretty impressive!

I've contacted them to see if they're associated with the 'Project Vital Sign' campaign being run by [Rachels' Well](#). I'll let you know what I hear back, but in the meantime, do go and sign the petition and have a look through their resources some time – it all looks like really good stuff.



Health news

Vitamin K revolution?

New member Lesley passed onto me a link to the US-based Better Bones website (www.betterbones.com) which claims to be run by a 'natural bone health expert'. It's always good to be well-read on important topics, so go and have a look round when you have a bit of spare time. There are articles on osteoporosis, nutrition, lifestyle factors and drug therapies among others.

Lesley included in her email an article on [Vitamin K](#) that caught her eye. It seems to be impressing researchers with its ability to reduce fractures when taken in high doses.

Natural sources of Vitamin K are leafy green vegetables, avocado, kiwifruit and parsley.

According to Wikipedia there's no danger of overdose of natural vitamin K, but the synthetic form K₃ is banned in the US. Also, patients taking warfarin need to make sure their Vitamin K levels are kept constant as it can interfere with the way the medication works.

NAMS "Menopause Flashes"

November issue:

Calcium: A Bonus for Bones & Beyond
The most abundant mineral in the body is calcium. Sufficient calcium intake can theoretically be obtained in the diet. Dairy products are the most common and cost-effective source. Leafy green vegetables, nuts, dried beans, soy products, and calcium-fortified fruit juices and other foods are other sources.

It is important to know about factors that may limit calcium absorption. These include:

- Low levels of vitamin D
- Consuming excessive amounts of oxalic acid (found in spinach and other greens)
- Consuming large amounts of phytates (contained in grains such as wheat bran)
- Decreased stomach acid due to acid-suppressant medication
- Possibly consuming tannins (found in tea)

Fat, phosphorus, magnesium, and caffeine have negligible effects on calcium absorption at usual intake levels.

Some women may have difficulty achieving the recommended intake of calcium from diet. Women who are lactose intolerant, follow a vegetarian diet that excludes dairy products, have poor eating habits, or just don't eat much dairy may benefit from the addition of a calcium supplement. The two most common forms are calcium carbonate and calcium citrate.

When trying to meet the daily 1200mg requirement, remember that it's the elemental calcium that counts -- and no supplement is 100% elemental calcium.



Health news cont.

NAMS “Menopause Flashes”

November issue cont.:

Read the labels carefully. For example, calcium carbonate contains 40% elemental calcium. That means 1,250 mg of calcium carbonate provides 500 mg of elemental calcium (1,250 mg x 40%). An easier way to determine the amount of elemental calcium is to look for the recommended daily allowance (RDA). Add a "0" to the end of the percentage listed to find the elemental calcium per serving. For example, an RDA of 50% would mean each serving contains 500 mg of elemental calcium.

Tips to ensure optimal absorption of calcium for bone health:

- Take divided doses of calcium (about 500 mg or less) throughout the day
- Take calcium carbonate with meals
- Allow a significant interval between calcium and fibre or iron supplements
- Drink plenty of water
- Get adequate vitamin D. A daily intake of 800-1,000 IU of vitamin D is recommended, either through 15 minutes of sun exposure daily (without a sunscreen), diet, or supplementation. If you are deficient in vitamin D you may require more.

Women should avoid calcium intakes greater than 2,500 mg/day, which can increase the risk for hypercalcaemia (too much calcium in the blood), which, in extreme cases, can lead to kidney failure.

I just found some more information on this topic on www.bones.org.nz. It is the website for Osteoporosis NZ, a national organisation established to reduce the incidence of osteoporosis in New Zealand.

I did their calcium counter questionnaire and was a bit surprised to learn I don't have enough in my diet, so I think I'll have to do something about that!

A note on supplements: there are so many out there, with varying levels and types of calcium, it's probably a good idea to talk to a health professional when deciding on the right supplement for you. N.

Natural memory boosters

(from www.care2.com)

According to ayurveda (Indian traditional medicine), you can give your memory a power boost at any age. Try the tips below and see if they work for you.

Stay Active

At least five days a week, take a 30-minute walk in the fresh air, or do 12 cycles of the hatha yoga series known as the sun salutation. Add inversions like the shoulder-stand and plow pose to increase blood flow to the brain.

Breathe!

Two yogic practices—alternate nostril breathing and anuloma viloma—stimulate the left and right hemispheres of the brain and improve memory. Or try this exercise: Stand straight with your eyes gazing forward. Gradually inhale, constricting the epiglottis (located just behind the base of your tongue) as you tilt your head back, looking up at the sky at the end of the inhalation. On the exhale, keep the epiglottis constricted as you slowly bring your chin to your chest, looking down to the ground. You'll know you've got it right if it sounds like the ocean when you hold a seashell up to your ear. Repeat this cycle 7 times.

Study Up

Memory is like a muscle—if you don't use it, you lose it. Exercise your mind by memorizing a new prayer, poem, or Sanskrit scripture, reciting it every morning until you know it by heart. Then start learning a new one.

Feed Your Brain

According to ayurveda, memory-boosting foods include sweet potatoes, okra, spinach, oranges, carrots, milk, ghee (clarified butter), tapioca, and almonds.

World-renowned ayurvedic physician Vasant Lad, BAMS, MASc, is the founder of the Ayurvedic Institute (ayurveda.com) in Albuquerque, NM.

Omega 3s & brain power

Staying with brain enhancers...

Due to their supposed ability to boost brain power, fight fat and clear skin, there are many reasons *why* you should increase your intake of Omega 3s, but what's the best way to do so? Cold-water fish, like mackerel and salmon, are popular sources, but what if you prefer a plant-based diet?

If you are trying to increase the amount of omega-3 essential fatty acids in your diet, flax seeds are a good choice. Flax seeds are the richest commonly available seed source of alpha-linolenic acid (plant- source omega-3's). If you eat whole flax seed rather than flax seed oil, you get the whole seed package: protein, fibre, minerals and phytochemicals along with the omega-3s.

100 grams of flax seeds yields about:
 35 grams of fat (60% omega-3 polyunsaturated, 18% monounsaturated, 10% saturated)
 26 grams of protein
 26 grams of fibre (14 grams insoluble, 12 grams soluble)
 4 grams of minerals
 9 grams of water



Health news cont.

Unless you do something to break the hard outer coating of the flax seeds, they may pass through undigested. You can whirl them in a blender for a few seconds to break them into rough pieces, or mash them with a mortar and pestle. Or grind them into a meal with a coffee mill or spice grinder.

Omega-3s are the least stable of the fatty acids, so the oil turns rancid quickly if it is exposed to heat, light or air. Grind the seeds shortly before you eat them, and store any surplus in the refrigerator. Sprinkle your seeds on cereal, into salads or any other food. They have very little flavour and just a bit of crunch. If they taste unpleasant, they're rancid and you need a new batch. (Rancid flax seeds or flax seed oil will smell like paint thinner).

Caution: Do not eat more than three or four tablespoons of raw flax seeds a day (we think one or two is plenty). They contain cyanogen which is harmless in small amounts, but in large amounts could act to keep your thyroid from absorbing enough iodine.

Cyanogen is rendered inactive by cooking. Add some flax seeds to a healthy diet full of vegetables, fruits, beans, whole grains and other seeds. Don't go overboard and eat them by the cupful! That applies to all foods — don't eat huge amounts of any single food, no matter how beneficial it's supposed to be. A healthful diet is a varied diet.

NB. Baker's Delight has a new loaf out containing Chia seeds that are another source of Omega-3 essential fatty acids. And it's yummy, too! I'd say the seeds taste like a cross between sesame and poppy seeds. N.

Call for your experiences!

Our website and our newsletters are ever-changing and always need more personal stories.

Newly diagnosed women get so much from hearing the experiences of others. Just knowing that someone else out there 'gets' what you're going through can ease the load.

If not your whole story, is there something you've learned that you think might help others on their journey?

It can be quite a cathartic thing to write down your experiences, so not only might you help someone else, you're almost certain to help yourself in the process.



Special topic

Six ways to overcome devastation
(from www.care2.com)

When I read this article, I thought it would've really helped me around the time my mother passed away. I remembered being completely overwhelmed by my out-of-control emotions.

But as I read through it, it struck me that the shocking diagnosis of POF or the experience of IVF failure is pretty similar in many ways to the grief over the death of a loved one.

I think I'm fairly safe to say most people reading this newsletter are completely aware of the true meaning of the word 'devastation'. I hope you can take something from this article that will help you on your journey. N.

Devastating, traumatizing stress is one of the most unpleasant traumatic experiences we can have. Whether it's news of the unexpected death of a loved one, a serious illness, financial loss, violence, the loss of a relationship, there's a kind of stress that makes simply staying in our bodies a Herculean task.

I've experienced this kind of pain on several occasions. Taking the actions below helped me navigate those choppy waters, and come out on the other side a bit more battered, but also more whole.

1. Homeopathic support

A friend told me years ago about a man whose wife died during a dental procedure. They had five children. Can you imagine? An ordinary day turned horrifically tragic. A close friend of the distraught man insisted that he take Dr. Bach's Rescue formula diluted in water. After several glasses of the Rescue formula-infused water, the man began to feel a bit better oriented to face his new reality. When I first heard this story, I was highly skeptical. Yet, when faced with an intense crisis, my willingness to receive help from any and all sources led me to the health food store, where I picked up the Rescue formula. The intensity of my stress did lift on and off, as I took the formula, and applied the other principles below.

Whenever I felt myself veering off track again, I'd take the drops, and would shortly return closer to equilibrium. If you're skeptical, as I was, I'd encourage you to give it a try. You've nothing to lose, but have peace of mind to gain.

2. Friends and family

Unless you've been Scrooge all of your life, there's nothing like a crisis to show you how loved you are. When under extreme stress, do not isolate. Reach out to people in whose presence you feel safe, or who you know can keep a



Special topic cont.

confidence. Trust your intuition. You know who to turn to. You know who will make it worse.

The love you receive may take many forms: a shoulder to cry on, a warm meal, free babysitting, keys to a country house, a massage. Be open to receiving the comfort and care offered by those who care about you.

3. Physical anchors

Tending to simple physical tasks such as eating, staying hydrated, sleeping, and basic grooming is a respectable accomplishment when we're mentally and emotionally overwhelmed.

When wondering what to do next, gently ask yourself, "Am I hungry, thirsty, or tired? Have I brushed my teeth, showered, combed my hair?" These are the times when your motto should be, "Easy does it."

4. Keep moving

If you are able, exercise. The release of adrenaline and the boosting of serotonin in your system will help ease anxieties.

5. Have faith

Crises test our faith. I'm not talking about our belief in specific dogma, but our overall confidence that we are appropriate for living, that we can ride the waves, that, ultimately, we will be okay. If you have faith in a Higher Power, now is a good time to pray, to pour out your heart, to be still and listen.

A few minutes of meditation can help you watch the noise going in your head and, perhaps for only moments at a time, detach from it, recognizing that you are bigger than what is happening to you, and that your life will go on despite the pain you're in.

6. Know you're not alone

Everyone goes through difficulties at one point or another. It seems to be part of the curriculum of being a human being. Be as kind to yourself as possible, breathe, be loved, and know that the persistent intensity of your pain shall pass.

Terri Hall-Jackson
Green Living Editor
www.care2.com



Is this too good to be true? Investigators at the Nestlé Research Centre in Switzerland found that eating a little chocolate every day for two weeks reduces levels of stress hormones. The investigators recruited 30 volunteers, male and female ages 18-35, who were interviewed to assess their general anxiety. Those who rated themselves as highly stressed were then asked to consume 1.4 ounces of dark chocolate per day for two weeks.

The researchers reported that eating the chocolate appeared to reduce levels of stress hormones in these volunteers.

This isn't the first study to suggest that chocolate can ease emotional stress, but it is the first to identify the positive biochemical changes chocolate promotes.

The study was published online on October 7, 2009 in the Journal of Proteome Research, a publication of the American Chemical Society. Other studies have shown that antioxidants in chocolate can make blood vessels more flexible and that the flavonoids chocolate contains can reduce the stickiness of platelets, inhibiting blood clotting and possibly reducing the risk of developing coronary artery blockages.

(Article from Dr. Andrew Weil's blog)



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WHAT'S ON GUIDE

Fertility NZ Contact Groups

NB. If your area isn't on this list, please email support@fertilitynz.org.nz to see if one is likely to start.

Auckland

Tuesday April 13, 20, 27

6 courses per year, each 3 weeks long.

Contact: cg.fnzauckland@gmail.com

Hamilton

Contact: support@fertilitynz.org.nz

Tauranga

Contact: support@fertilitynz.org.nz

Rotorua:

Contact: support@fertilitynz.org.nz

Hawke's Bay

Contact: support@fertilitynz.org.nz

Palmerston North

Contact: support@fertilitynz.org.nz

Nelson

Wednesday April 7th at 7pm.

First Wednesday of the month. Hour-long meetings followed by supper.

Women only.

Contact: lyndajessentye@clear.net.nz

Wellington

No date as yet, but hope to run one later in the year.

Contact: wellingtonfnz@gmail.com

Christchurch

Contact: support@fertilitynz.org.nz

Dunedin

Contact: support@fertilitynz.org.nz

NZ Early Menopause Support Group National Meeting

June 5-7, 2010

Rotorua

Come and meet others living with an early menopause at this relaxed, fun and informative girls' weekend away.

Four speakers, goodie bags, pampering at the Polynesian Spa... it'll be a great weekend!

Email your interest to:

nzem.info@nzord.org.nz

Fertility Associates Free Fertility Information Evening

Auckland

Tuesday March 30, 7pm – 8.30pm

Novotel Ellerslie

Rimu 3 Room

Greenlane East

Ellerslie

Please email us on

events@fertilityassociates.co.nz if you would like to come along, so we make sure we have your seat and information pack ready.

International Events

Australasian Menopause Society 14th Annual Congress

September 26-29, 2010

Sydney, Australia

"The Ascent of Women"

Including a session on early menopause.

Fertility Society of Australia Conference

October 10-13, 2010

Adelaide

"A Healthy Start"

Daisy Network Annual Open Day

June 12, 2010

London

Celebrating 15 years of the Daisy Network.

North American Menopause Society 21st Annual Meeting

October 6-9, 2010

Chicago