



Tips for Coping with an IUI or IVF Treatment Cycle

By Erica Mindes, Ph.D., LCP

Intrauterine insemination ([IUI](#)) and in vitro fertilization ([IVF](#)) treatments improve the possibility of pregnancy and childbirth, offering opportunities for family building to individuals and couples. Some challenges may come with these opportunities, though.

What to Expect: Common Emotional Responses during an IUI and IVF Cycle

Research has shown that patients tend to perceive an IUI or IVF treatment cycle as moderate-to-very stressful. However, it is important to remember that each person will experience the stress differently based upon his or her own personality and life experiences.

- During IVF treatment, it is very common for mood to fluctuate over the course of the cycle, for both women and men. Feelings of anxiety and distress may increase as the cycle progresses from monitoring to retrieval to transfer.
- For both IUI and IVF treatments, the two week waiting period is often felt as the most stressful time during the cycle.
 - [Navigating the Two Week Wait](#)
- The first IUI or IVF cycle tends to be the most stressful. Many patients say that subsequent cycles of the same form of treatment feel more manageable.
- Should a treatment cycle be unsuccessful, it is normal to experience feelings of grief, sadness, loss, and disappointment.
 - [Coping with Infertility](#)

Tips for Coping

From humor to a desire to be prepared at every twist and turn, everyone will cope with the stresses and emotions of IUI and IVF treatment differently. Here are tips to help you through this time:

- ◆ Prior to starting your cycle, make a list of additional or lingering questions and schedule an appointment to ask your physician or nurse questions and discuss concerns.
- ◆ “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Shore up your resources by scheduling supportive counseling sessions as you prepare for and proceed through a treatment cycle. However, choose a counselor carefully; a license to practice does not ensure a professional has the specific knowledge and sensitivity needed to provide appropriate support during fertility treatments. Ask your physician or nurse for a recommendation.
 - SGF Counseling Staff (link to this page - http://www.shadygrovefertility.com/support_staff)

- ◆ Exercise is one of the best ways to alleviate stress, anxiety, and depression, but consult your doctor about maintaining your regular exercise routine during a treatment cycle.
- ◆ Humor is a great coping mechanism—during your IUI or IVF cycle, plan to see or rent comedy films, watch your favorite comedy TV shows, or read a humorous book.
- ◆ Utilize relaxation exercises and mind-body techniques. For example: breathing exercises, guided imagery, meditation, and relaxation apps/CDs/downloads.
- ◆ Use cognitive restructuring techniques to identify recurring negative thoughts about the cycle or about infertility, and reframe those thoughts into positive statements.
 - [How to Manage Worry on Your Infertility Journey](#)
- ◆ Write it down. Research shows that writing about a stressful event can be a therapeutic process and may reduce feelings of anxiety, depression, and distress. And remember that no one will be grading you — throw the rules of spelling and punctuation out the window.
- ◆ Set aside 20 minutes each day to talk with your partner about the IUI or IVF cycle and limit your infertility talk to those 20 minutes.
- ◆ During the two-week waiting period, plan daily activities you enjoy doing, either by yourself or with your partner, to help fill the time.
- ◆ Identify sources of social support you can rely on during the cycle, e.g., friends or co-workers who have experienced infertility or IUI/IVF, internet support sites, or attend a support group.
 - Free SGF Support Groups (link to <http://www.shadygrovefertility.com/support-groups>)
- ◆ Think about where you would like to be and who you would like to be with when you find out the results of the cycle.
- ◆ Before starting the cycle, identify a plan B with your doctor. The plan may ultimately change, but this will give you something to hold on to should the cycle be unsuccessful.

Try out some of these tips for coping during your current or upcoming IUI or IVF treatment cycle. As the IUI or IVF cycle progresses, allow the treatment to take its course, and focus on reducing feelings of stress and distress.

Dr. Mindes is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist with the practice of Covington & Hafkin and Associates, seeing patients at offices in Northern Virginia and Richmond. She has conducted research and written on the psychological responses to infertility and infertility treatment, and recently co-authored the chapter, "Counseling Known Participants in Third-Party Reproduction" for [Fertility Counseling: Clinical Guide and Case Studies](#). Dr. Mindes is a member of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine Mental Health Professional Group (MHPG) and serves on the MHPG Executive Committee.