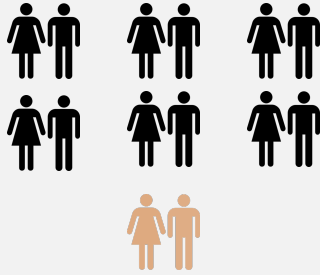


Infertility is a disease that will affect 1 in 7 couples in the UK ¹



Difficulty conceiving is a widespread problem. It is the second most common reason for women to visit their GP, the most common reason being pregnancy.

The **World Health Organisation** classifies infertility as a disease and, as with any other medical condition, it is deserving of treatment. **If left untreated infertility can result in stress, anxiety, depression and the breakdown of relationships.**

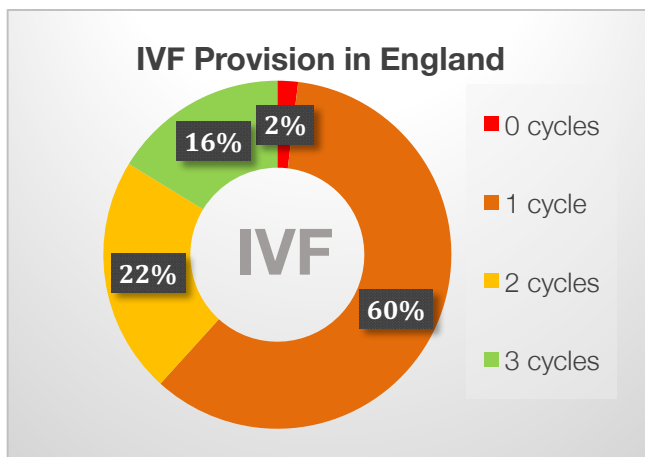
IVF Provision on the NHS

In 2004 NICE issued a clinical guideline on infertility, updated in 2013, which recommends that **all eligible couples should have access to three full cycles of IVF** where the women is aged under 40.² According to NICE, a full cycle of IVF treatment should include one round of ovarian stimulation, and the transfer of **all resultant fresh and frozen embryos.**

Despite this clear and long-standing guidance, IVF provision across England has remained consistently below the NICE recommendations and is subject to considerable regional variation. In 2016 Fertility Fairness (FF) conducted an audit of every CCG in England. This found that **just 16% of CCGs provide the NICE recommended three cycles**, with 22% offering two cycles and a majority of 60% offering only one cycle. When compared with data from 2014, these numbers reveal a **7% fall in CCGs offering two cycles of IVF**, with a corresponding fall in CCGs offering additional cycles.

This postcode lottery for treatment is compounded by the fact that **almost half of all CCGs do not use the correct NICE definition of a cycle of IVF.** This restricts the chance of a successful treatment and, as NICE has noted, compromises the cost effectiveness of the service. There is also a pattern of sustained disinvestment in fertility services, with **10.5% of all CCGs currently consulting on reducing IVF provision.**

CCGs often cite the cost of IVF as the main barrier to treatment; however, for the last three years FF's audit has revealed a wide variation in the amount that CCGs pay. **In 2016 the price reported could range from £1379 to as much as £6000 for a single cycle.** Action is needed to prevent these wide variations in cost.



At least **45% of CCGs** do not offer a 'full cycle'

Over 80% of CCGs fail to meet NICE recommendations on the number of cycles

10.5% of all CCGs are currently consulting on reducing IVF provision

What needs to be done?

- Eliminate the postcode lottery
- End the wide price disparity in IVF costs
- Ensure fair and equitable access across England

We can achieve this by

1. Using NICE guidance to encourage informed and cost effective commissioning.
2. Developing a national tariff for tertiary fertility services.
3. Standardising access criteria across England.

¹ <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Infertility/pages/introduction.aspx>

² <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg156>