

Infertility on the Menu

Why RFK Jr., Trump's nominee to head the Department of Health and Human Services, may raise the birth rate.

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The total fertility rate—the number of children that American women average over their lifetime—is now at an anemic 1.62, well below the 2.1 needed for replacement, writes Steven Mosher. Shutterstock/NDAB Creativity



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Commentary

The collapse in U.S. birth rates is reaching dangerous proportions.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has just reported that the total fertility rate—the number of children that American women average over their lifetime—is now at an [anemic 1.62](#), well below the 2.1 needed for replacement.

Many couples are childless, although not by choice. One in six are simply infertile, while others have great difficulty conceiving.

Americans are turning to increasingly using hi-tech workarounds—in vitro fertilization and surrogacy—to have babies.



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Our grandmothers didn't have this problem. They got married, and

the babies simply came. They would be astonished—horrified is



probably more like it—to learn that couples now have their eggs and

sperm harvested in a desperate attempt to create babies in a petri

dish. And they would want to know why.



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So should we—if we want to see our children's children.

Part of the problem may be what we eat. Over the past few decades, everyday foods have been larded up with hidden chemicals that were unknown in grandma's time.

Some of these chemicals, researchers tell us, are called “endocrine disrupters.” Put into plain English, this means they interfere with the actions of the body's hormones, including those like estrogen and testosterone, which are vital to the delicate systems that maintain reproductive health. They mimic or block our natural hormones, throwing off the balance and communication that is vital for ovulation and sperm and egg quality. The result is infertility.

As the “American Standard Diet” has become increasingly synthetic, fertility in the United States has plummeted. One [study](#) shows that men today have 60 percent less sperm than their grandfathers' generation did. The results indicate that if this decline is not reversed, the sperm count in American men will fall to zero by 2045.

That's zero—as in no more children.

Infertility issues have spiked in women as well. Polycystic ovarian syndrome and endometriosis are on the rise, as are diagnoses of hormone imbalances, inflamed ovaries, and poor egg quality, all of which lead to higher miscarriage rates.

Research has traced many of these conditions to secret “disruptors” hidden in our food: pesticides, preservatives, phthalates, and perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). These chemicals play a significant role in the declining birth rates and fertility issues that Americans are grappling with today.

Pesticides are sprayed on crops to ward off insects, fungi, and diseases, but their residue often remains on the produce that makes its way to our plates. While their impact on female fertility is still being studied, their ability to kill sperm is unquestioned.

Eat organic fruits and vegetables if you want to be a father.

Virtually every packaged food contains artificial preservatives to prevent spoilage and mold. Some, like propylparaben, which is found in pastries and tortillas, have been found to have a direct impact on fertility. If you are considering starting a family, checking labels for this ingredient may help you along the way.

The next item to avoid—phthalates—is as difficult to avoid as it is to pronounce since they are widely found in plastic packaging and [other everyday products](#). You can make small, everyday differences—and start protecting your reproductive system—by opting for a metal water bottle, replacing plastic kitchen tools with metal or wooden ones, and even just removing frozen vegetables from their plastic bag before steaming them in the microwave.

The final hidden enemies of your fertility are PFAS. These “forever chemicals,” so-called because they do not easily break down in the environment, are found in the waxy coating of cardboard food containers such as soda cups, wrappers, and to-go boxes. One specific

PFAS to watch out for on labels is BPA. Avoid it if you are hoping for a positive pregnancy test.

The good news is that we are not alone in fighting endocrine disruptors or encouraging higher birth rates.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., who has been nominated for Secretary of Health and Human Services, has for years warned about these hidden “disruptors.”

“The assault on our children’s cells and hormones is unrelenting,” he has noted, pointing out that children are now going through puberty a full six years earlier than previous generations.

If endocrine disruptors can induce early puberty in children, it seems certain that they will also impact their future fertility, and not in a good way.

President-elect Donald Trump ran on the premise that the United States needs more babies. RFK Jr. joined Trump’s team to make America healthier.

Getting these endocrine-disrupting toxins out of our food and water supply would accomplish both.

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