

Infertile women benefit from new option for fallopian tube evaluation

by Tina Smith

Female fallopian tube disorder is estimated to occur in up to 35 percent of infertile women and is one of the most frequent factors for those struggling to conceive. Additionally, up to 15 percent of women seeking fertility treatment may have uterine cavity abnormalities such as tumors or damage to the endometrial lining.

According to the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, “evaluation of tubal patency is a key component of the diagnostic workup in infertile couples.” Early on in the process of exploring a woman's fertility, the possibility of blocked or malformed fallopian tubes should be explored. If eggs do not travel through the tubes from the ovaries, none can be fertilized by sperm. Resulting embryos also must be able to exit the tubes in order to implant in the uterus.

Traditionally, a hysterosalpingogram (HSG) has been the only method by which a doctor could observe a woman's tubes from outside the body. During the HSG procedure, a radio-opaque dye fills the uterus and spills out the ends of functioning tubes. Any irregularities or scarring in the lining of the uterus also can be seen during this x-ray procedure.

Now, another option is available to confirm if fallopian tubes are open and functioning. The new FemVue™ procedure can be performed in a physician's office while a patient is awake and alert, so neither sedative medications nor radiological facilities are necessary.

With FemVue™, a non-allergenic mixture of saline and air is introduced into the fallopian tubes and observed under ultrasound, allowing immediate feedback of tubal status by a fertility specialist. No exposure to radiation is involved. The best timing for the procedure is after a menstrual period ends but before ovulation begins.

This procedure also gives a general picture of the uterine cavity. For women with abnormal menstrual bleeding, structural problems in the uterus such as fibroids, polyps, adhesions or scar tissue often can be identified.

Reproductive Endocrinologist Joey Bird, MD, of the Fertility Center in Chattanooga says, “The advancement in ultrasound technology allows for better visualization of the pelvic structures, making FemVue™ tubal evaluation an effective alternative to radiologic procedures.”

“The FemVue™ procedure is very simple to schedule and allows women to avoid x-ray exposure,” adds Dr. Barry Donesky, also a Fertility Center reproductive endocrinologist.

Although the procedure is not painful, many patients describe it as uncomfortable – much like strong menstrual cramps. However, the discomfort is generally short-lived, and medications typically are given prior to the procedure to help relax muscles, alleviate pain and protect against bacterial or other infections.

Talk with your fertility specialist today to find out if FemVue™ is an option for you.

Tina Smith is a communications specialist and patient support coordinator for the Fertility Center in Chattanooga and can be reached at 423.899.0500 or tina@myfertilitycenter.com. Tina speaks openly about her long struggle with infertility and hopes to encourage other women who have not yet become moms. Her two miracles are ages 9 and 10. FemVue™ is a Femasys™ product distributed by Norgenix.