

WOMEN'S HEALTH

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THE
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NEWSPAPERS

Health Smart

With health care costs rising, women need to closely examine their medical coverage to ensure that they get bang for their buck.

The editors at Glamour magazine offer the following tips:

Negotiate with your doctor. Doctors will often drop some charges or work out a flat rate.

Question diagnostic tests - especially routine ones. It's reasonable to ask whether tests are necessary, especially those performed during an annual physical.

Be smart about prescriptions. Shop around, find out about generic drugs and partially fill prescriptions to find out if you're sensitive to the medication.

Request itemized bills. Nearly 90 percent of hospital bills have errors. Check carefully.

Don't wait around. The American Medical Association estimates that the average patient waits 18 minutes to see a doctor. Get the first appointment of the day or the first one after lunch. (CNS)

Tough Odds

Despite advances in the field, infertility treatment is still a long road. Only one in four women who undergoes the treatments ever ends up in the delivery room. Among women over 40, the odds drop to seven in 100. And about half of couples who go for infertility treatment don't have insurance that covers the procedures.

HEALTH BRIEFS

Consumer Reports offers the following tips for those considering going to a fertility clinic:

Make sure you really need it. Get a basic infertility workup.

Move swiftly if you are past 35. Aggressively seek qualified treatment as soon as you suspect a problem. Before starting any procedure, the clinic should test to see if the ovaries can respond to hormonal stimulation.

Engage a qualified physician. You need a doctor with advanced training and certification in reproductive endocrinology.

Check the clinic's credentials. It should be a member of the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology, and the lab should be certified under the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Act of 1988.

Check the clinic's success rate. Call the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology, (205) 978-5000, and ask for reports on clinics in your area.

Know your insurance. Get a copy of your actual policy document, not the usual "benefits summary." Ask the insurer for advance written determination of coverage. Keep copies of everything and get everything in writing.

Get counseling. Infertility treatment can bring on crises both individually and as a couple.

Get information. RESOLVE, an infertility self-help organization, runs support groups throughout the country. Call (617) 623-0744 for information.

And check out alt.fertility, an Internet news group for people dealing with infertility. Remember that any information should be confirmed by a doctor; most participants in support groups are not physicians. (CNS)

Don't Believe the Hype

There are so many different reports about breast cancer each month that women often don't know what to think. But not knowing what to believe - or disbelieve - about breast cancer may put you at added risk for developing the disease. Some myths to watch out for:

Family history is a major factor in developing breast cancer. In fact, 80 percent of breast cancers occur in women with no family history. The top risk factor is being a woman.

A negative mammogram means you don't need to worry for a while. There is a high rate of false negatives among mammogram exams. That may be especially true of younger women, who have denser breast tissue to begin with. Self-exams often yield lumps that turn out to be cancerous.

A mastectomy offers the best shot at survival. Not necessarily true. If the cancer hasn't metastasized, a lumpectomy, followed by radiation treatments, will do the same job, doctors now say. If it has spread, you probably need extra treatment anyway.

If a lump hurts, it's not cancerous. That's usually true, but not always. Don't fail to get a lump checked just because it is painful. (CNS)

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Anna Luisa Di Lorenzo, M.D.




Dr. Di Lorenzo has opened her new office in Troy, after having practiced in Oakland County for over three years.

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She completed her residencies at the Kresge Eye Institute and at Wayne State University.

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Dr. Di Lorenzo is a member of the medical staff at Beaumont Hospitals in Royal Oak and Troy and Crittenton Hospital in Rochester.