

13 March 2024

ESHRE launches factsheets to highlight environmental threats to fertility and reproductive health

Embargo: 00.01hrs Thursday 14 March 2024

Governments must act now to address the effects of climate change and air pollution on fertility rates and reproductive health, says a document published by the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) today (Thursday).

The factsheets* provide comprehensive information on global warming, evidence of its impact on fertility, and calls on policymakers to promote swift prevention measures.

Priorities should be to reach net zero CO₂ emissions within the next 20 years, and to keep global warming within a 1.5% increase, says the expert panel that developed the factsheets.

Countries are also urged to support research into the effects of air pollution and heat exposure on fertility and pregnancy. The ESHRE document says any new evidence could then help guide policies to protect populations.

Air pollution and extreme heat are strongly linked with compromised fertility such as lower sperm counts, reduced pregnancy rates, and an increased risk of miscarriage, says the evidence-based document.

Key data outlined in the factsheet includes:

- Living within 200 metres of a major road is linked to a higher risk of self-reported infertility. Pregnancy rates increase by 3% for every 200 metres between a residence and a major road.
- A total of 2.7m (18%) of pre-term births worldwide could be attributed to pollution from fine particulate matter.
- Exposure to wildfires has been linked to a risk of low birth weight.
- Pregnant women who are exposed to extreme heat are at higher risk of pre-term birth, low birth weight babies, and stillbirth.
- Mothers exposed to heat during delivery are more likely to experience hypertension, poorer pregnancy outcomes, and longer hospital stays.
- Up to around 3.6 billion people live in areas deemed "highly vulnerable" to climate change.

The document is based on recommendations** published by ESHRE last year to highlight the growing threat from climate change, pollutants, hormone-disrupting chemicals, toxic substances, and other related risks.

Professor Willem Ombelet, who helped produce the factsheet, said: "As this document shows, there is increasing evidence to link environmental factors with declining fertility rates and adverse pregnancy outcomes.

EU members are among countries that have taken action to address this concerning issue. But too often male and female fertility is not seen as a priority and more measures are needed to tackle the impact of climate change.

Swift action is needed not only to protect this generation but also the health and fertility of future generations."

Notes for Editors:

- Please click [here](#) to read the ESHRE factsheets in full.
- ** Please click [here](#) to read the ESHRE recommendations in full.
- ESHRE is the world's leading society in reproductive science and medicine. The organisation promotes interest in, and understanding of, reproductive biology and medicine, and collaborates with politicians and policymakers throughout Europe.

For further information on the details of this press release, contact:

Laura Rossignoli at ESHRE

Mobile: +32 (0)499 25 80 46

E-mail: press@eshre.eu