

from the front page

A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT

The Costs of Motherhood

You want to be a parent. You're ready to provide a loving home where a child can grow into adulthood. But because of reasons outside of your control, conceiving a child naturally is not an option. If you are still determined to become a mom or dad, the road to parenthood will come at a cost.

\$7,000-\$20,000

IN VITRO FERTILIZATION

Depending on the state, the cost of IVF can range from \$7,000 to \$20,000 per cycle out of pocket, with a nationwide average of \$12,000, according to Dr. Silvina Bocca, professor at Eastern Virginia Medical School. That does not include medications to increase egg production, which cost \$5,000 to \$6,000. Testing embryos for genetic abnormalities can cost another \$4,000. Only 15 states mandate insurance coverage for infertility, with fewer including IVF in coverage.

\$37,000-\$43,000

ADOPTION

Society advises many infertile couples to seek adoption, but that, too, has costs. Adoption of newborns in the U.S. costs an average of \$43,239 with an adoption agency and \$37,829 with an adoption attorney, according to the Adoption Cost & Timing Survey by Adoptive Families. That does not include any fees stemming from cases in which the family did not wind up with the baby in the end. Thirty-eight percent of respondents said they experienced at least one of these false starts.

\$60,000-\$150,000

SURROGACY

In the U.S., a surrogate pregnancy can cost \$60,000 to \$150,000 depending on the state and the surrogate agency. Prospective parents using their own embryos first incur all of the costs of in vitro fertilization. Compensation to the surrogate is typically \$30,000 to \$50,000. Experienced surrogates are paid more, as are those who carry multiples. Parents also spend thousands in legal fees, and they also are responsible for any medical costs of the surrogate during the pregnancy.

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Working, Paying Hoping and Praying

If Stephanie McBurney had remained in her native England, the road to motherhood would have been less expensive.

But she already had made a life for herself in the U.S. when she crossed paths with Paul McBurney at the pub where she worked.

A holiday romance blossomed and the couple married in 2013 and settled in Clermont.

At first, having kids didn't even come up.

When the time came for parenthood, they never dreamed it would be so difficult.

"They call it the infertility club," Stephanie said. "We had no idea we would be part of it."

After two years of trying, they visited a specialist, who diagnosed Paul's low sperm count.

He took the diagnosis hard, then underwent surgery to try to correct the issue in December 2015.

That cost them \$1,500, with insurance covering most of it.

Then they tried three rounds of intrauterine insemination, a nonsurgical option, totaling another \$1,800.

The years of infertility treatments took more than a financial toll.

Stephanie grew tired of the April Fool's fake pregnancy

announcements on social media and the well-meaning remarks to take it easy.

"Just relax, it will happen' is the most unrealistic and unhelpful comment that I've ever heard," she said.

As is being told to "just adopt."

Her experience has pushed her to speak up about infertility, a topic society seem to prefer avoiding, Stephanie said.

"I talk about it because I'm not ashamed of it," she said. "It's nothing to be ashamed of."

They began weighing the expense of adoption against IVF and realized neither wanted to stop trying.

"Something just clicked, and we both agreed that we would do anything that we could to do the IVF," Stephanie said.

Though living comfortably on two salaries — Paul runs two businesses and Stephanie is a correctional officer — their earnings fell short. They launched an online fundraiser.

When donations failed to add up, they remortgaged their house.

Stephanie said it is disappointing that insurance companies allow such disparities in coverage to exist across states, cutting off those who cannot afford IVF from parenthood.

"Who are they to take that away?" she said.

Earlier this year, she started thrice-daily injections to prepare her uterus for egg extraction, and eight viable



Erin Williams | Daily Sun

Stephanie and Paul McBurney, of Clermont, tried to conceive for nearly five years and started in vitro fertilization in February. Stephanie is now seven weeks pregnant. They saw the baby's heartbeat for the first time during an ultrasound Friday.

embryos were created.

The McBurneys implanted one and froze the others.

They saw the baby's heartbeat for the first time during an ultrasound Friday.

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A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT

Balancing Ethics, Advancements

Moral opponents accused Drs. Robert Edwards and Patrick Steptoe of meddling with nature in the development of in vitro fertilization. As technology progresses, scientists continue to question the possibilities and the ethics of bringing scientific fantasies to life.

GENETIC TESTING

Before placing embryos inside the uterus during a round of IVF, patients have the option to test for genetic abnormalities linked to Down syndrome or other conditions. Some clinics also let patients choose the sex of the embryo. Such advances have raised the prospect of gene alterations that someday would let parents choose the eye and hair colors of their babies. Beyond aesthetic changes, these methods could enable scientists to correct genes that cause inherited diseases.

3D PRINTED OVARIES

Last May, Northwestern University announced a new reproductive technology that could be adapted to human use. Treatments for diseases, including cancer, can decrease the functioning of a woman's ovaries, leading to infertility. Hoping to eventually make parenthood possible for these women, scientists created 3D-printed bioprosthetic ovaries that were tested in mice. This allowed them to eventually give birth to healthy baby mice. The technology will be tested next in pigs.

ARTIFICIAL WOMBS

Up to now, techniques for helping parents with fertility issues conceive a child have relied on growing babies in a woman's womb. That could change. Last April, researchers at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia succeeded in creating an artificial womb — a plastic bag filled with fluids — that held premature lambs for four weeks while they developed. Though human trials are a distant prospect, scientists hope the research eventually can be applied to helping babies born prematurely.

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McBurney is now seven weeks pregnant. "It's an unconventional way of getting pregnant, but it's our way. It's our journey," she said. "Seeing my husband as a father, I just know I'm going to fall in love with him even more."

Pioneers Determined to Beat the Odds

Debbie Hutchins didn't have to volunteer at Sunday school long before she knew kids were in her future. "I always loved children," said Hutchins, of the Village of Hadley. "I always felt I wanted to be a mom." But when she and her husband, Tom, started trying, it didn't happen. Then, a colleague in the hospital where Hutchins worked as a nurse mentioned that a new fertility clinic was opening. Hutchins decided to give it a go and became the program's second patient. She found success on the first try, and gave birth to twins on Dec. 3, 1989, at 34 years old. Although IVF helps millions of infertile couples get pregnant, risks from multiple births include higher rates of caesarean deliveries, maternal hemorrhage, pregnancy-related hypertension and gestational diabetes. Risks to the infant include



Jennifer Hutchins, of Leesburg, center, laughs with her parents, Debbie and Tom Hutchins, in their home in the Village of Hadley. Jennifer was conceived through in vitro fertilization and was born Dec. 3, 1989, when Debbie was 34.

prematurity, low birth weight, elevated risk for birth defects and infant death. In Hutchins' case, a healthy baby girl, Jennifer, emerged, but her son, Thomas, died shortly after birth. "It was a mixed blessing," Hutchins said. "She's a joy to us and always has been." The Hutchinses underwent a second round of IVF but were

unsuccessful in conceiving. Still, "(IVF) made our lives complete," she said. Marsha Crecelius, of the Village of Buttonwood, also was a pioneering patient for IVF. At age 40, after years of building a general contracting company, she and her then-husband learned that a problem with her fallopian tubes would make conception difficult.

"When they said you can't, I said, 'Oh. It sounds like a challenge,'" she recalled. Crecelius, who lived in Rhode Island, signed up for a new IVF program at a Boston hospital with a success rate of 16 percent. "It was not for the faint of heart, or one who would be too

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Debbie Hutchins flips through a book of baby pictures of her daughter, Jennifer.

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