

International Federation of Fertility Societies

Global Standards of Infertility Care

Standard 3.

Definition of infertility and recurrent pregnancy loss

Name	Definition of infertility and recurrent pregnancy loss, recommendations for practice
Version number	3.0/IFFS/Standards
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Introduction:

The goal of IFFS Guidelines are to provide policy- and decision-makers and the clinical and scientific community with a set of recommendations that can be used as a basis for developing or revising institutional or national guidelines on selected practice recommendations for infertility practice.

The document addresses minimal standards of practice but does not provide rigid guidelines but rather gives recommendations that provide the basis for rationalizing the provision of infertility services in view of the most up-to-date information available.

Because country situations and programme environments vary so greatly, it is inappropriate to set firm international guidelines on infertility practice. However, it is expected that institutional and national programmes will use these guidance documents for updating or developing their own infertility guidelines in the light of their national health policies, needs, priorities and resources. The intent is to help improve access to, quality of, and safety of infertility and assisted conception

services. These improvements must be made within the context of users' informed choice and medical safety. Adaptation is not always an easy task and is best done by those well-acquainted with prevailing health conditions, behaviours, and cultures.

Rationale:

In order to ensure relevant comparisons between hospitals and IVF centres both within and across national boundaries it is necessary to use a consistent definition of conception and pregnancy.

Recommendation for practice:

Definition of infertility and recurrent pregnancy loss for management purposes.

1. **Infertility** is a disease,ⁱ defined by the failure to achieve a successful pregnancy after 12 months or more of regular unprotected intercourse or failure to achieve a pregnancy after a series of inseminations of donor sperm in a same sex couple.

Earlier evaluation and treatment may be justified based on medical history and physical findings and is warranted after 6 months for women over age 35 years.

2. **Recurrent pregnancy loss** is a diseaseⁱ distinct from infertility, defined by two or more failed pregnancies.

When the cause is unknown, each pregnancy loss merits careful review to determine whether specific evaluation may be appropriate. After three or more losses, a thorough evaluation is warranted.

3. For purposes of determining when evaluation and treatment for infertility or for recurrent pregnancy loss is appropriate, **pregnancy is defined** as a clinical pregnancy documented by *a priori* ultrasonography or histopathologic examination.ⁱⁱ

Implementation: Recommendation for Practice 3.0 will be circulated in the following ways:

1. Publication in the IFFS newsletter
2. Inclusion in the IFFS World Assisted Conception Survey
3. Circulation to all member countries secretaries
4. Request to WHO and FIGO for inclusion in relevant publications

References:

ⁱ Disease is “any deviation from or interruption of the normal structure or function of any part, organ, or system of the body as manifested by characteristic symptoms and signs; the etiology, pathology, and prognosis may be known or unknown.” From: Dorland’s Illustrated Medical Dictionary, 31st edition, 2007:535.

ⁱⁱ Definition of infertility and recurrent pregnancy loss. ASRM Practice Committee. Fertility and Sterility Vol. 89, No. 6, June 2008