

# International Federation of Fertility Societies

## Global Standards of Infertility Care

### Standard 4.

#### Prevention of infertility and promotion of reproductive health

Name	Prevention of infertility, recommendations for practice
Version number	4.0/IFFS/Standards
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Date of first release	October 2009
Date approved by IFFS	October 2009
Date of review	October 2015

#### **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.

The intent of IFFS practice standards 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. Because national 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 clinical standards documents for updating or developing their own infertility guidelines in the light of their national health policies, regulatory framework, needs, priorities and resources. Adaptation is not always an easy task and is best done by those well-acquainted with prevailing health conditions, behaviours, and cultures.

One of the purposes of this IFFS Practice Standard is to implement preventative measures in reproductive health to decrease the risks that affect women and men in those countries where there is poor access to primary health services for general and reproductive health in particular.

There is a clear association between lack of access to effective primary healthcare and reproductive health. This practice standard promotes improvement in reproductive health and aims to improve future fertility. In addition we also support all public sectors interested in preventing measures to avoid infertile diseases. Therefore in specific circumstances for example in developing countries, integration of family planning and infertility services should be considered to enable the most resource efficient establishment of effective reproductive healthcare including infertility.

**Rationale:**

Infertility prevention should be considered along with all other topics that must be made public and addressed to decrease the causes of infertility. Of the approximately one hundred million couples that suffer from fertility problems worldwide, most of them are from developing countries. Sexually transmitted diseases are prevalent, particularly in developing countries and predispose to tubal infertility. This practice standard aims to reduce the incidence of STD's as well as using attendance of a patient for infertility assessment as an opportunity for screening. Concurrent STD's (Chlamydia) also predisposes the patient to ascending pelvic infection if uterine instrumentation is carried out as part of infertility assessment or treatment. STD's are also known to increase the likelihood of preterm labour if pregnancy becomes established. Therefore screening and treatment before pregnancy is important. Finally, undiagnosed HIV infection poses a risk of vertical transmission to the offspring and diagnosis before pregnancy is important to ensure appropriate strategies are adopted to protect the fetus.

The objective of this practice standard is to help people to have a healthy sexual and reproductive life. The mission is to provide appropriate information and promote services that allow people to protect their sexual and reproductive health.

Its purpose is to establish guidance to avoid situations that lead to infertility. The current guidelines for infertile couples are useful once infertility has already been established. The objective of this standard is to promote preventional measures in reproductive health to decrease the risks faced by women and men, mainly from developing countries, due to the low access (or lack thereof) to primary health services regarding their health in general and more specifically, to their reproductive health.

**Recommendation for practice:**

1. Promote Family Planning

To ensure that all primary health-care and family planning facilities are able to provide the widest range of safe and effective family planning methods.

2. Improve Maternal and Perinatal Health

To ensure policies and practices are aimed at improving maternal and perinatal health, especially in resource-poor settings.

3. Preventing Unsafe Abortion

To ensure policies and practices are aimed at providing access to safe abortion including care and contraceptive advice to the fullest extent provided by law.

4. Control Sexually Transmitted and Reproductive Tract Infections

To improve strategies for controlling sexually transmitted infections (STI/STDs) including strategies to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV and other STI/STDs.

5. Promote Adolescent and Adult Reproductive and Sexual Health

To promote optimal sexual health and a positive view of sexuality for women, men and young people.

#### 6. Gender Issues and Reproductive Rights in Reproductive Health

To ensure that reproductive health programmes and policies respect, protect and fulfill human rights and promote gender equity and equality.

#### **Implementation:**

Recommendation for Practice 4.0 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
5. Circulate to organizations that share our mutual interest in reproductive health and have responsibility for women's health through direct communication, website and media communication.

#### **References:**

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