**Losing weight but not your dreams: Fertility after an endometrial hyperplasia diagnosis**

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A diagnosis of endometrial hyperplasia can seem like a fast-track to infertility. Your desire for children means that surgical treatment isn’t an option right now. On top of this, your doctor may also recommend weight loss, leaving you feeling a bit helpless and unsure of the best way forward. If this is you, you’re in the right place!

[Endometrial hyperplasia](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK560693/) (EH) happens when the cells of your endometrium (your uterus lining) start to grow abnormally. Without treatment, it can lead to endometrial cancer in some, but not all, women. As a young female with EH, you may also find another worrisome effect of EH, which is infertility. EH has several [risk factors](https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/endometrial-hyperplasia) but, luckily, [along with your doctor’s help](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5593673/), there are a few steps you can take at home to improve pregnancy odds.

Much of EH resolves around hormones; namely, too much estrogen and not enough progesterone. When this happens, endometrial tissue can grow abnormally. While post-menopausal women tend to struggle with this hormonal imbalance more frequently than younger women, high estrogen levels can be seen in women of all ages. [One major risk factor](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34223280/) for this is common, though we all hate to talk about it. This is the topic of obesity.

Experts note that a higher body mass index (BMI) contributes to [many cancers](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5593673/), including endometrial cancer. One reason is because fat produces estrogen, which [stimulates endometrial tissue growth](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2880878/). If you have EH, pregnancy may not be possible without treatment because a healthy endometrium is required for a fetus to attach and grow.

As a woman with EH who wants to preserve her fertility, you and your doctor are probably facing a challenge. While surgery can help, it isn’t a current option for you, given that you want children someday. Luckly, there are some fertility-sparing [therapeutic options](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4695458/) available, and research shows [promising results](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6543108/?report=reader) with treatments like temporary [progesterone therapy](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6517239/).

But hormone therapy isn’t the end of the story. If your doctor advises you to lose a little weight, try not to get upset–there is a good reason why.

EH is a frustrating diagnosis but, for someone who has a higher body weight *and* EH, your [chances of pregnancy may be even lower](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24680589/) than having EH alone. This is because a higher BMI may [negatively affect the outcome of your fertility-preserving treatment](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29533020/) for EH.

Luckily, weight loss, along with medical therapy, can help you manage EH and improve your chances of pregnancy. While we still don’t know the impact that weight loss has on actual pregnancy outcomes, it can–even in small amounts–help improve your chances of getting pregnant while on medical therapy. A [2021 study](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8286730/) of patients with a BMI ≥25 found that weight loss of even 5% increased pregnancy and live birth rates in those with EH and early stage endometrial cancer. It was a small study, but [others are finding other encouraging](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8895268/#B5) results, too.

It is also hopeful that even a small amount of weight loss can help prevent your EH from coming back. (Yes, [EH can come back after treatment](https://aacrjournals.org/cancerpreventionresearch/article/13/4/403/47355/Risk-Factors-for-Recurrence-in-Patients-with)) If EH [relapses before pregnancy](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8330111/), the odds of pregnancy may decline. However, fortunately, researchers are finding more and more that weight control can even help prevent recurrence of EH. What’s more, if your EH does recur, even just a 10% weight loss may help improve the odds of pregnancy [the next time you have EH treatment](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8458864/).

Needless to say, weight loss is pretty important for EH treatment and fertility. Yet, you may be wondering how you can even start your weight loss journey. Whether your doctor recommends a goal, or you have one in mind, it is important to follow all of your doctors’ recommendations for keeping safe when it comes to nutrition, physical activity, and the use of medications or supplements.

As you start your journey, there are a few things you may wish to consider:

**Body fat testing:** You may find you have times when your weight has plateaued, despite feeling fitter, having a smaller waist, and feeling more energized. This could mean your body fat levels have lowered. Researchers [aren’t sure if total body fat matters for endometrial cancer risk](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32338769/). And there aren’t any great studies on body fat percentage and EH. However, monitoring your body fat may help you maintain motivation and monitor your progress. It can also [help decrease your risk](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29130609/) of other diseases, like diabetes.

There are many [tests available for body fat testing](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6366261/), including DEXA scans, skin fat calipers, body fat scales, hydrostatic weighing, air displacement plethysmography, 3D body scanners, and bioelectrical impedance analysis. These range in terms of complexity, accuracy, and cost. Choose a test according to your budget and goals and, when setting body fat percentage goals, make sure you check in with your doctor first.

**Working with a health coach:** Weight loss usually involves long-term habit change. Yet, this isn’t always easy, as habits are notoriously hard to break. This is where [health coaching](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28596147/) can be invaluable. Health coaches can work with you to help you set goals, make small daily changes, and be held accountable on your weight loss journey–partners for maintaining habit change.

**Consulting a nutritionist:** A weight loss plan doesn’t just involve decreasing your energy intake. It’s also about making sure you are getting enough nutrients to stay healthy. [Working with a nutritionist](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28826840/) can help you determine the best nutritional plan for your personal needs, especially if you hope to become pregnant soon.

**Hiring an athletic trainer:** Physical activity can help with weight loss, but it is especially [important for weight maintenance](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/physical_activity/index.html). In addition, [strength training helps you maintain lean body mass](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33955140/) and strength as you continue to lose weight. If you are like most and struggle to maintain a regular physical activity regimen, consider hiring an athletic trainer to stay on track.

**Working with an obesity medicine specialist:** If your lifestyle changes aren’t working, or you stop losing weight after several months of consistent effort, an [obesity medicine specialist](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6378500/) may be able to help. Specialists understand the nuances of weight management and may prescribe medication to get you over that hump. Just make sure you chat about this with your other doctors as, sometimes, medications can interact with one another or cause side effects. Also, make sure you are not on any weight loss medications when actively trying to become pregnant.

Having a baby is a lifetime goal that many people share, so it’s completely understandable that EH is a concerning and frustrating diagnosis. However, luckily, there are a few solutions that don’t involve medications or invasive procedures. Not only can healthy habits impact your efforts to become pregnant, but they will continue to help maintain your health throughout your lifetime.

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