

# Rise of the Midlife Mom

Have celebrities found the fertility fountain of youth? *WH* explores what's behind the 40-plus baby boom.

Bump watchers are abuzz: Well past her "Just a Girl" days, Gwen Stefani, 44, is reportedly expecting her third child. Her pal, 42-year-old stylist Rachel Zoe, was close to having baby number two at press time, and actress Halle Berry recently popped out a kid—at 47!

The truth is, birthrates for all U.S. women ages 40 to 44—many of whom are getting knocked up for the first time—have hit a four-decade high, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. That fact calls into question the long-accepted belief that fertility plummets after age

35, leaving older women with scant chances of conceiving. Is 45 the new 35? Well, maybe.

New research suggests that around 65 percent of women who start trying to get pregnant naturally at age 40 will be successful, per the journal *Human Reproduction*. That's a huge—and welcome—number to many who've

been told to "forget it" by 40. However, it comes with a caveat, says Nicole Noyes, M.D., a reproductive endocrinologist at the New York University School of Medicine. "That success rate goes down rapidly from 41 to 45, after which point almost all women are infertile," she explains. In other words, they're out of viable eggs.

Enter the ever-advancing field of assisted reproductive technology. These days, just because you're out of your own eggs doesn't mean you can't use someone else's and carry a baby to term (assuming you have the funds—assisted fertilization procedures can run upwards of \$10,000). "Many of the babies you see in women around their mid-forties are either from donor eggs or their own previously frozen eggs," says Noyes.

Indeed, it's an attractive option for women who put off baby making for career building. And it's especially appealing to fit 40-plus women who know that, in the coming years, they'll likely still have the physical and mental energy to handle the demands of motherhood. "The age for what's considered 'too old' has definitely gone up," says Jean Twenge, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at San Diego University and author of *The Impatient Woman's Guide to Getting Pregnant*. "There is a sense that you live your life first, then have kids. Better nutrition and exercise routines are helping older women feel that they can do just that." Remember, though, no matter how young you look on the outside, on the inside your eggs are still aging.

—Faye Brennan

## Eating to Extend Fertility?

Granted, your ability to get preggers depends largely on your genes. But you can start making conception-friendly diet choices to up your odds.

The first step toward a healthier reproductive system is balancing your hormones through diet, says holistic health counselor Alisa Vitti, founder of the food therapy program FloLiving.com and author of *Woman-Code*. Here, her list of fertility-boosting noshes to eat now.

### Avocados

The fruit is high in monounsaturated fats, which could

improve fertility. One study found that women who ate the highest amount of these healthy nutrients while undergoing IVF therapy had triple the success rate of those who ate the lowest.

### Sunflower Seeds

Take down a handful three times a week. Rich in zinc, the little suckers can help balance the reproductive

hormones that lead to high-quality human eggs.

### Cinnamon

The spice has insulin-reducing powers and may help increase your ovulation rate. Sprinkle it into your smoothies.

### Eggs

Eat 'em in poached or soft-boiled form (no scrambling!) twice a week. Keeping the yolks runny preserves their vitamin D and B<sub>6</sub>

content, both of which spur the production of progesterone, a hormone necessary for pregnancy.

### Buckwheat

The seed is rich in compounds that help lower insulin and testosterone levels, a process that can enhance ovulation. Cook up a quarter cup to eat with dinner three times a week.

