

Dear Fortunate

You are lucky. If your ex-boyfriend hadn't told you about his STI, you may not have known that you were infected. But since you got treatment quickly, you are not likely to have a problem.

Many people aren't as lucky as you. Women often have no signs of an STI for a long time and don't know anything is wrong. If people don't treat STIs quickly, the tubes in their sexual organs can get infected and blocked, and they can become infertile.

The more often you have STIs, the more likely you are to become infertile and the greater your risk of HIV. So, in future, use a condom every time you have sex.

Also, STIs are not the only cause of infertility. Other health problems can also cause it. For a couple who are infertile, it is most important to share the problem and try to solve it together. Family planning clinics can also help.

Our society often blames the woman for infertility but in half the cases the problem is with the man. Couples who can't have children need support, not rejection, from their communities.

I hope this information helps you.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- What do people say about men who can't have children? And about women who can't? Make two lists and see if the feelings are similar or different. Who gets more sympathy? Why do you think this is?
- Discuss ways you can become more sympathetic to infertile people. What can you do to improve the attitude of your community?
- If you and a partner wanted children but couldn't have your own, would you consider adopting a child who has no parents? Why or why not? What worries do people in your area or culture have about adopting, especially a child from outside your own family?
- See cards 13 and 25 for more information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs).