

Reproductive Health

IN THE FIRE SERVICE

FF/PM Maia Brown, President
The Beltane Guild



Firefighters are making reproductive health decisions that carry profound consequences—impacting not only their own well-being, but also the health and lives of their spouses and children.



AGENDA

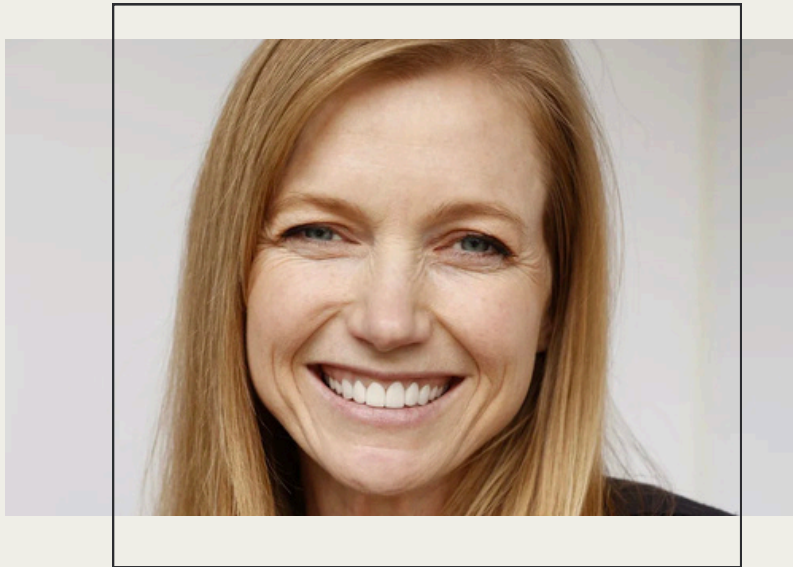
- Introductions
- The Village
- More Research is Needed
- The 30,000' Legal Flyover
- Storytime
- The Gold Standard Policy
- Chief for a Day
- Questions



INTRODUCTION



THE VILLAGE



President, Founder
Maia Brown

Firefighter Paramedic



Director of Research
Brittany Hollerbach

Dr. Brittany Hollerbach is an Associate Scientist and Deputy Director for the Center for Fire, Rescue & EMS Health Research (CFREHR), part of NDRI-USA, Inc. She received her Ph.D. in Kinesiology from Kansas State University and recently completed a postdoctoral research fellowship at Skidmore College under the direction of Dr. Denise Smith where she focused on cardiovascular disease in the fire service.



Director of Education
Melissa Lawlor

Melissa Lawlor is a culturally sensitive, goal-oriented and passionate Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM, Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP-C), Lactation Consultant, support Firefighter/EMT, Fire Commissioner and dynamic public speaker.



Fractional Legal Counsel
Alisa Arnoff

Alisa B. Arnoff is a founding member of the Chicago law firm of Scalabrino & Arnoff, LLP. Alisa concentrates her practice in the areas of employment and labor law, representing privately and publicly held companies throughout the country.



**INDRI
USA**



**NATIONAL FIRE
ACADEMY**





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[FIRE DEPARTMENT POLICY WRITING](#)

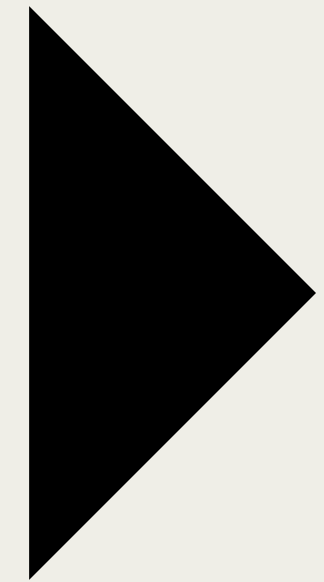
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*A NONPROFIT FOR
FIREFIGHTER REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH*



Reproductive Health Studies in Focus:
Male-specific





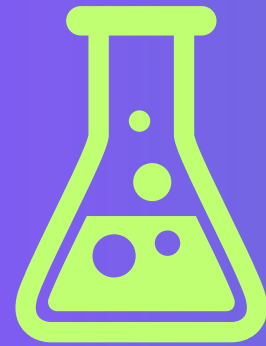
**Male firefighter
infertility shown as
46-53% HIGHER than
the general population**



heat



emotional trauma
stress



chemicals



night work
(sleep disruption)



exertion

SEMEN PARAMETERS AFFECTED:

- volume
- concentration
- motility
- total sperm count

SPERM MORPHOLOGY

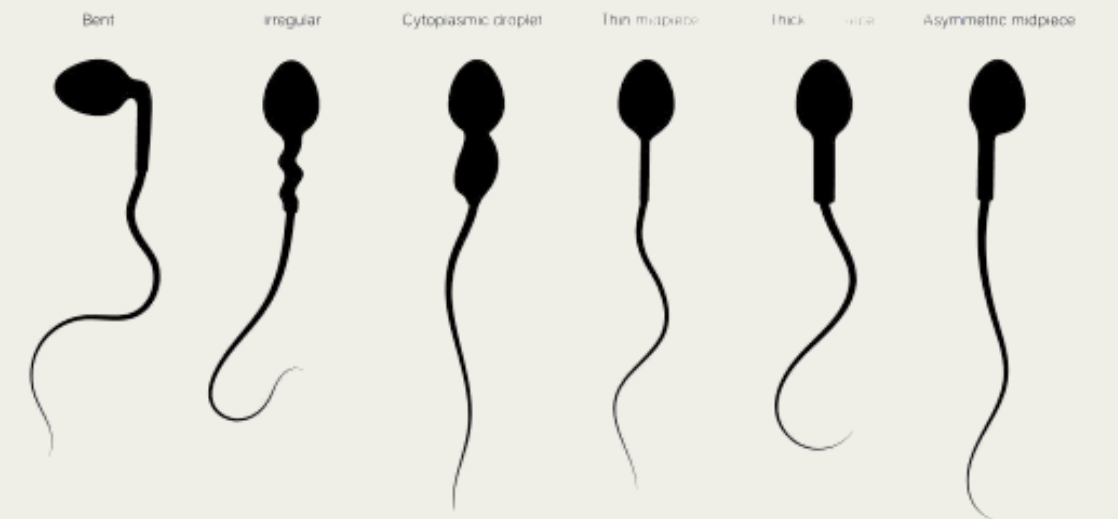
Normal spermatozoon



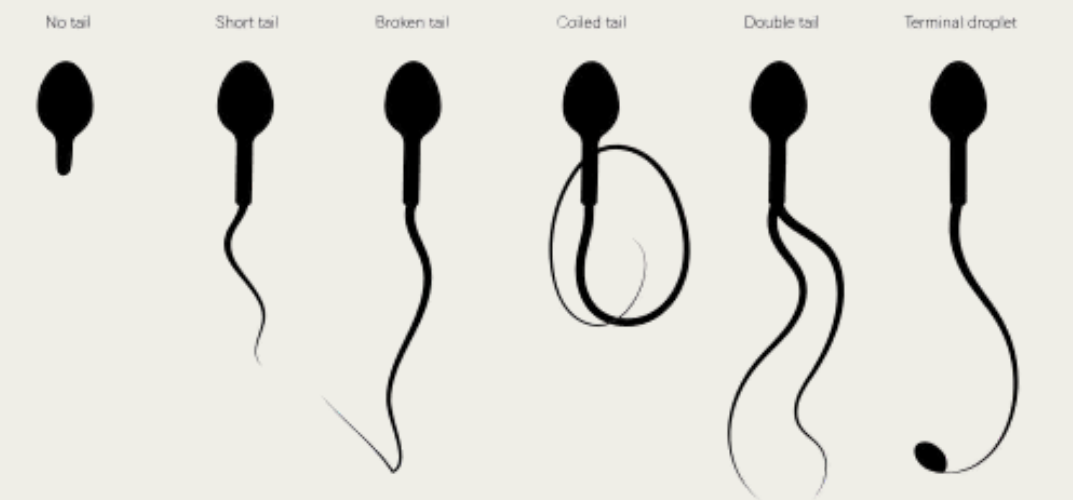
Head defects



Midpiece defects



Tail defects



Firefighting may affect the offspring of male firefighters

BIRTH DEFECTS AMONG OFFSPRING OF FIREMEN

Get access >

ANDREW F. OLS

American Journal of

<https://doi.org/>

Published: 01

Pages 312–321,

“ Cite 🔑 P

Abstract

The authors

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comparison

occupations

with the risk

studied, an a

(relative to a

ventricular s

1.02–7.18) an

offspring. W

having a child with a ventricular septal defect (OR = 4.66, 95% CI 1.66–13.17)

and atrial septal defect (OR = 3.76, 95% CI 1.40–10.07). Analyses using a pathogenetic classification for these heart defects yielded similar increased odds ratios for firemen



jenniferlynn

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offspring. By

2 liveborn

973. Two

firemen: 1)

in other

) comparison

defect groups

fire fighter

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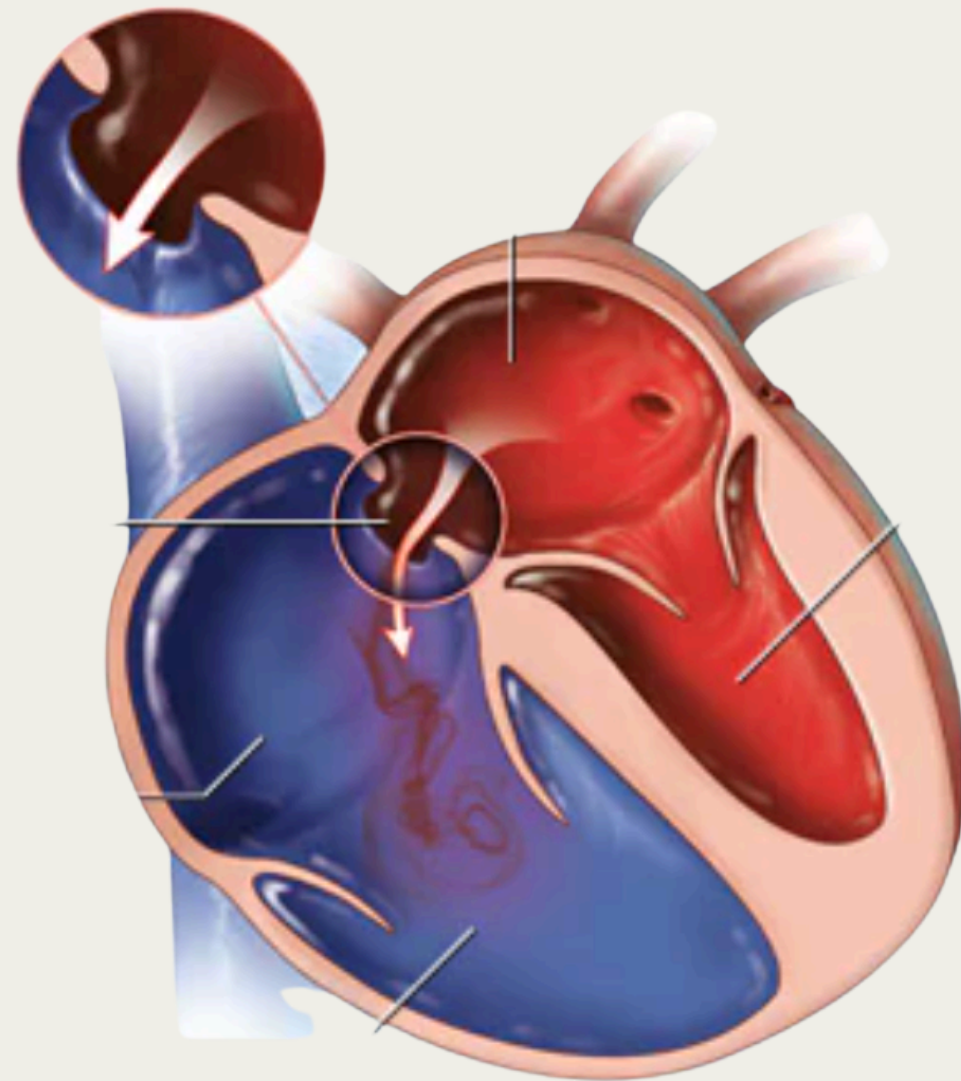
) among

d risks of

1.66–13.17)

Analyses using a

Septal Defects



ATRIAL SEPTAL DEFECT:

Hole between the heart's upper chamber

VENTRICULAR SEPTAL DEFECT:

Hole between the heart's lower chambers



Photograph source: CDC-Beijing Medical University collaborative project.

Congenital absence of finger(s) (remainder of hand intact) (Q71.30)



ADDITIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS

- cleft palate
- cleft lip without palate
- transverse limb deficiency

~~Problems~~

Solutions

**how can we support
firefighters?**

- **modified duty**
- **transfer to a slower station**
- **new hires: egg/sperm
freezing and reproductive
health analysis**
- **education**



Men who are experiencing infertility issues may have accommodation rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Family & Medical Leave Act and WA State Paid Family Medical Leave.

Male Infertility



Parents or parents-to-be may be entitled to leave under the Family & Medical Leave Act with respect to adoption, foster placement and childrearing needs.

Adoption/ Fostering

CONCLUSION:

Male firefighters are at higher risk of:

INFERTILITY

BIRTH DEFECTS

Reproductive Health Studies in Focus:
Female-specific





**Exposure to carbon
monoxide and high
temperatures may increase
the risk of**

BIRTH DEFECTS

**in offspring of female
firefighters**

McDiarmid, Lees, Agnew, Midzenski, & Duffy, 1991



Miscarriage rates among female firefighters are at least

2.3x
HIGHER

compared to the US National average

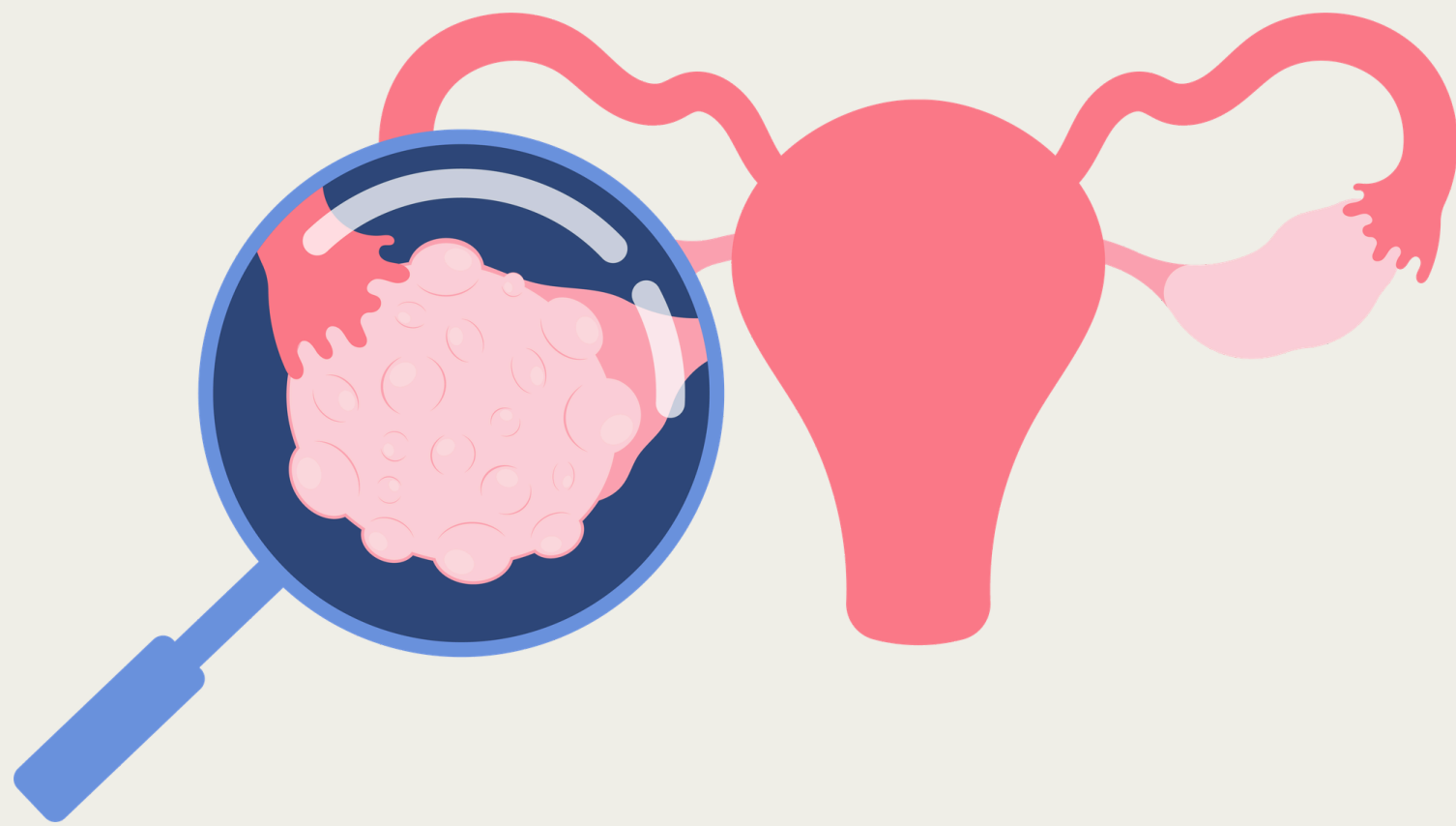


effects of **STRESS** in offspring

- autism
- mood/affective disorders
- reduced cognitive ability
- malformation
- reduced head circumference

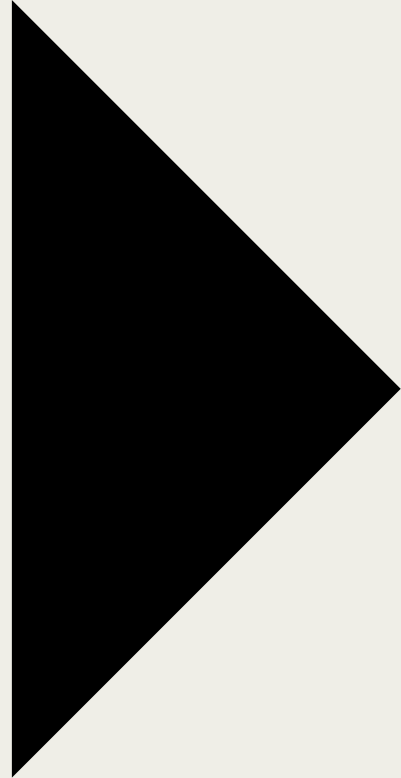
ANTI-MULLERIAN HORMONE

a reflection of ovarian reserve,
predictor of fertility



Hazards encountered in the workplace can lead to reproductive health problems such as:

- **infertility/reduced fertility**
- **menstrual/ovulatory cycle disorders**
- **sex-hormone imbalances**
- **miscarriages**
- **stillbirths**
- **birth defects**
- **child developmental disorders**
- **premature births**
- **lower birth-weight babies**





A Never Before Seen Look At Human Life In The Womb | Baby Olivia

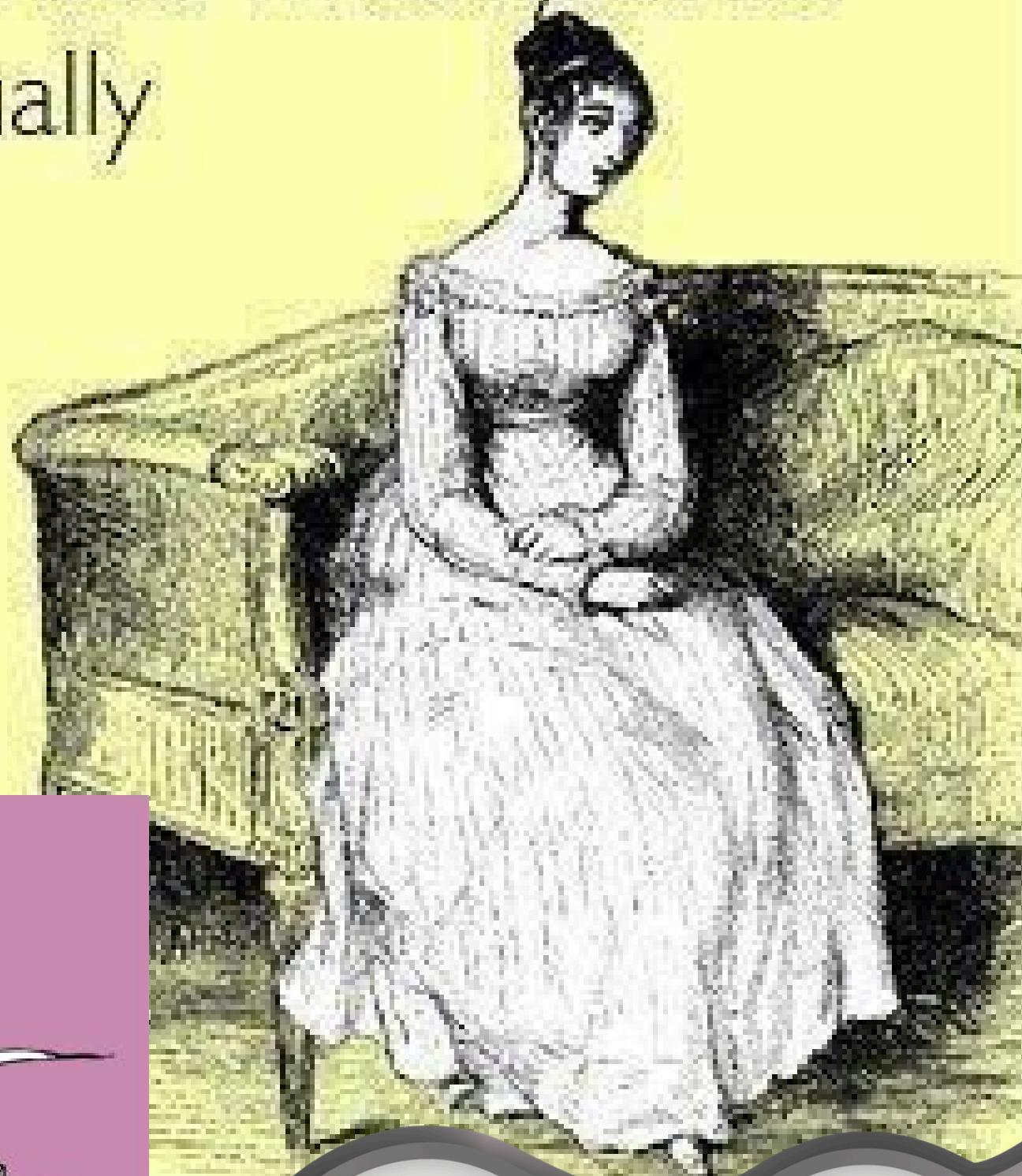
Live Action

WINDOW TO THE WOMB



Watch on  YouTube

That awkward moment when you're not sure if you actually have free time or you're just forgetting everything.



Just so we're clear about this... I'm under no obligation to stay in the same mood for any length of time.



someecards
user card

Menopause. Hmmm. So, what you are saying is that I'm to look forward to - ten years of hell... followed by death. Am I missing anything?



Menopause. It's like being a testy human volcano with PMS. Only sweat pours out instead of hot lava. But people still run from you in fear of their lives.



someecards
user card

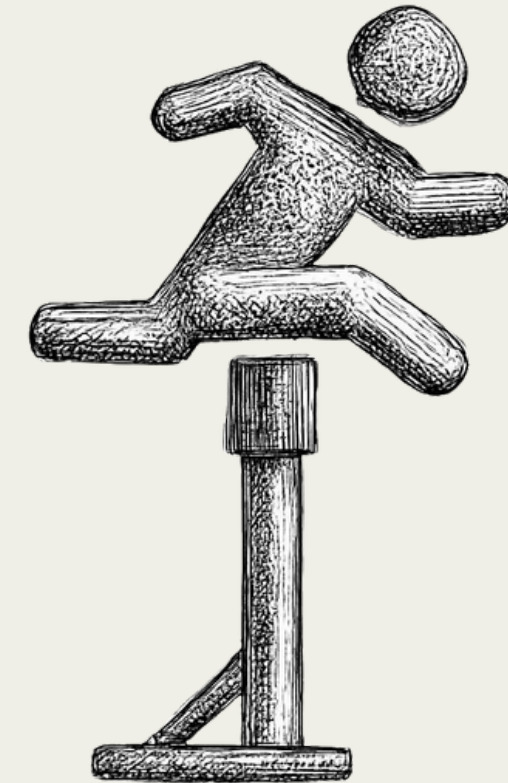
Menopause

Symptoms

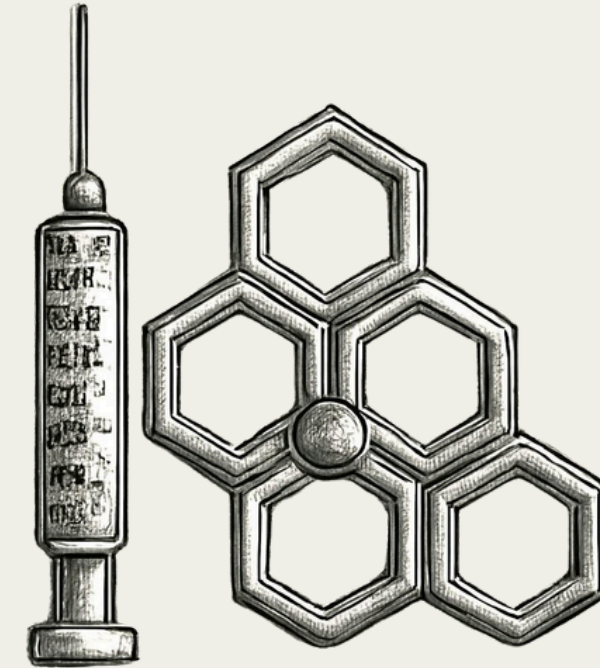
- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Sleep disturbances/difficulty sleeping
- Mood disturbances
- Problems with memory and/or concentration
- “Brain fog”
- Genitourinary syndrome
- Heavy periods and clots
- Urinary problems
- Palpitations
- Migraines and headaches
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Reduced muscle mass
- Skin irritation

Accommodations

The purpose of a workplace adjustment is to, wherever possible, remove barriers that get in the way of doing the job. The adjustment should be tailored to address the barriers/issues specifically experienced.



Examples



temporary reassignment

100% cotton clothing

hormone therapy

flexible work schedules

ability to attend doctor's appointments

more frequent breaks

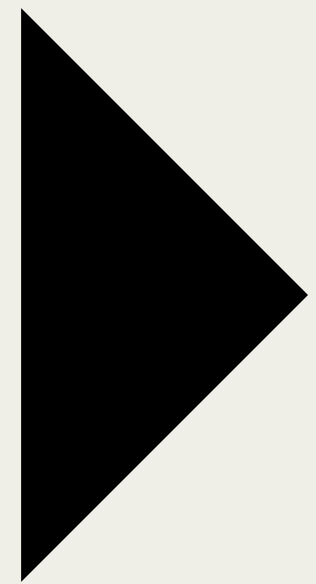
proximity to a restroom

Summary

- Menopause is a very personal and individual experience.
- For some, menopause can be uneventful, but for others it can impact greatly on their working lives making it increasingly difficult to function effectively as a result of their symptoms.
- Women can be left to feel less confident and more susceptible to fatigue and stress at work.
- **Officers and colleagues can play a very important role in supporting women going through the menopause.**



REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH LAW



Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA)

Adopted by the federal government in 2024

The PWFA requires covered employers to make reasonable accommodations for:

A qualified employee or applicant with a known limitation related to:

PREGNANCY

CHILDBIRTH, or

RELATED MEDICAL CONDITIONS

...absent undue hardship



Employees and applicants are eligible for accommodations under the PWFA

IMMEDIATELY

with no requirement to have worked a specific length of time prior to eligibility.

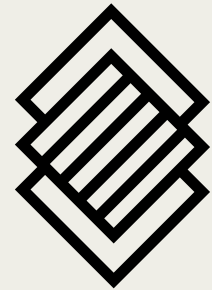
Covered conditions

- Current, past, potential and intended pregnancy
- Infertility, fertility treatment and the use of contraception
- Termination of pregnancy, including via miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion and ectopic pregnancy
- Gestational diabetes, preeclampsia and hyperemesis gravidarum
- Nausea, vomiting, high blood pressure, depression and anxiety
- Anemia, endometriosis, infection, frequent urination and morning sickness
- Loss of balance, sciatica, carpal tunnel syndrome, dehydration and edema
- Lactation and conditions related to lactation
- Menstruation

Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

- periodic naps to counter the effects of pregnancy
- uniform/PPE alterations
- delayed response while expressing breastmilk
- exemption from mandatory hiring while expressing breastmilk
- private space to express breastmilk
- leave/modified duty to attend health care appointments or receive health care treatments relating to pregnancy, childbirth or related health conditions (including fertility treatment)
- modified/light duty assignment
- remote work assignment
- schedule changes, including delayed start times, part-time work and paid or unpaid leave

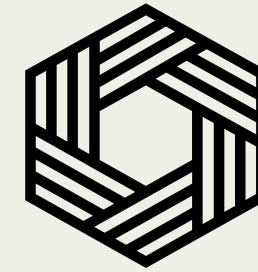
Important PFML Legal Takeaways



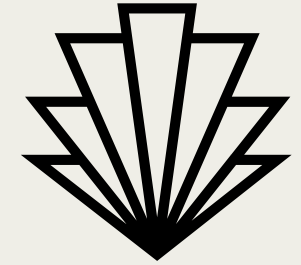
Firefighters are **NOT** required to notify the department of their pregnancy



To claim undue hardship, there must be no available positions anywhere in the organization



Denying remote work assignments when work can be done from home violates the PFWA



PWFA applies to not just pregnancy but pregnancy-related conditions

real life

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Refuse modified duty until the third trimester
- Require a FF to use sick/vacation leave for over a month while you “figure out” how to transition them to modified duty
- Insist the only way to use PFML (state) is to do it concurrently with FMLA (federal)
- Refuse a remote work assignment to a pregnant FF prescribed bed rest who is already on modified duty with a role that could be completed from home
- Require a doctor’s note to prove a pregnancy

...more

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Allow a proposal for a new or updated pregnancy policy to sit on the Chief's desk, unanswered for years
- Require a firefighter to announce their pregnancy the moment they know
- Wait until a firefighter is pregnant to revise your pregnancy/reproductive health policy
- Have workplace conditions for expressing breast milk so horrible a firefighter chooses to pump in their car instead

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

It is an unfair practice to base employment decisions or actions on negative assumptions about pregnant women, such as:

- Pregnant women do not return to the job after childbirth
- Time away from work required for childbearing will increase the employer's costs
- The disability period for childbirth will be unreasonably long
- Pregnant women are frequently absent from work due to illness
- Clients, co-workers, or customers object to pregnant women on the job
- The terms or conditions of the job may expose an unborn fetus to risk of harm

The WAC

43.10.005

Employer must provide reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for two years after the child's birth

RECOMMENDATION:

remove FF's who are expressing breastmilk from the mandatory hiring list

"Undue hardship" means an action requiring significant difficulty or expense.
An employer may not claim undue hardship for limits on lifting over
seventeen pounds.



(The threshold of employees must be fifteen or more for this law to be applicable)

MY STORY





hersheywiggles

Harborview Medical Center: Norm Maleng Building



Liked by **katieskorupa** and **31 others**
hersheywiggles My daily mantra. Thanks Cat for the perfect birthday present!
December 22, 2017



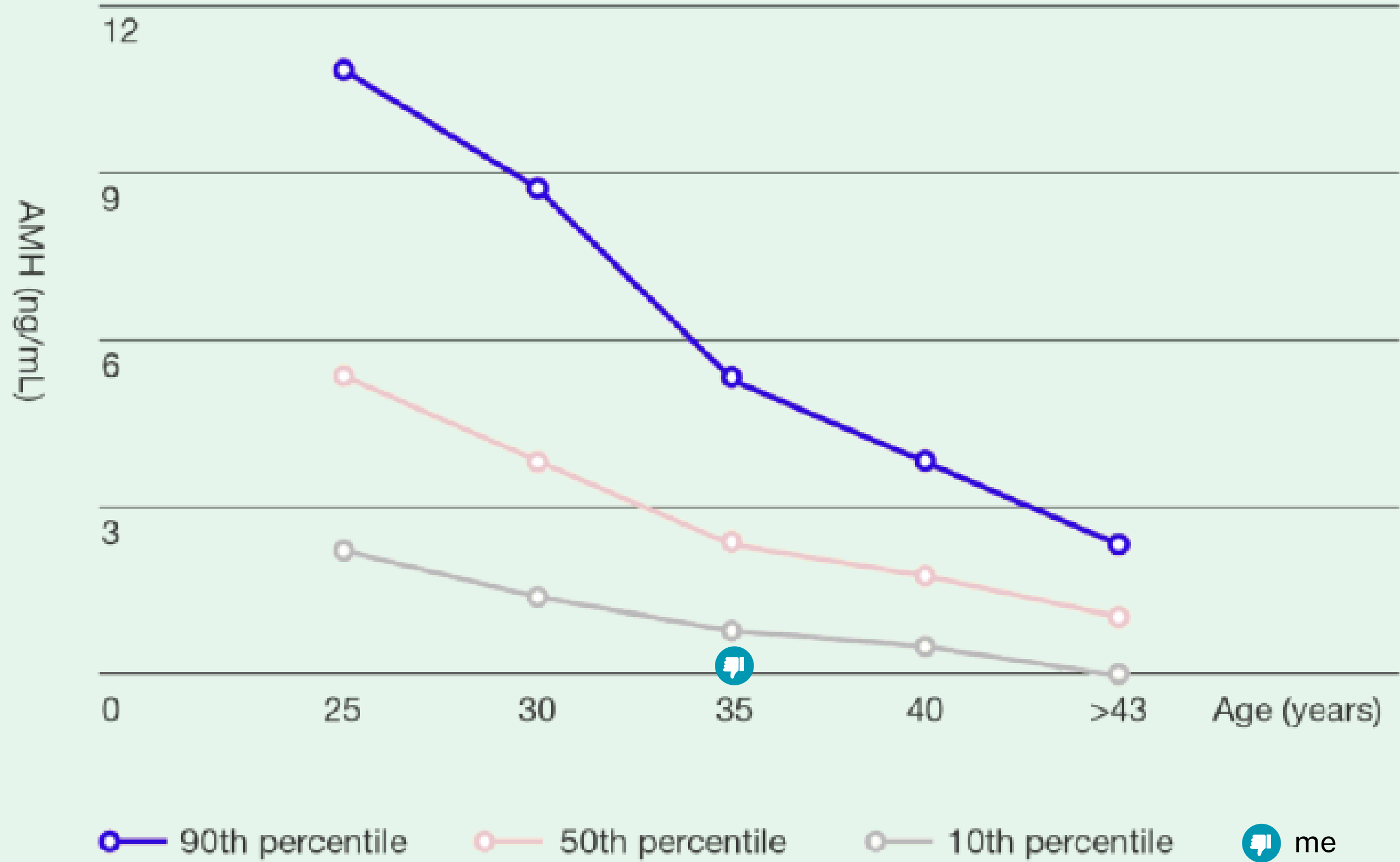
hersheywiggles



Liked by **katieskorupa** and **23 others**
hersheywiggles So yesterday was the big OR (operating room) day. The day started out with a beautiful sunrise. It's a little surreal down there... [more](#)
November 9, 2017

2018: Paramedic School.
Obtained blood work to
check my hormone levels

Low AMH and age



2019: Froze my eggs and met my husband



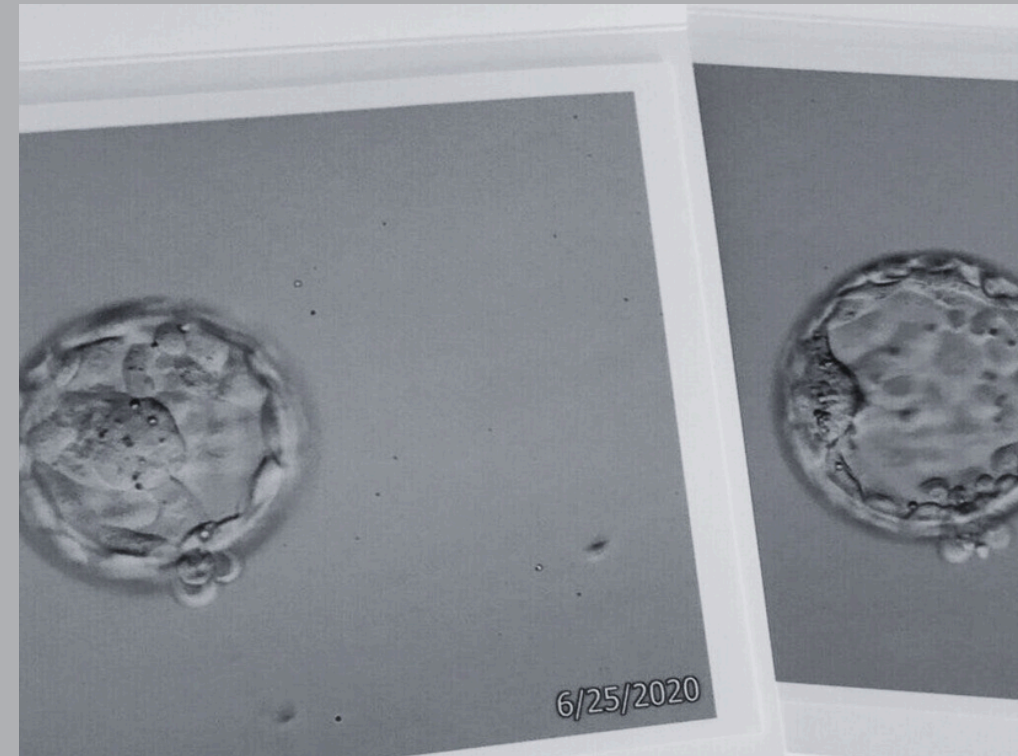
Peter, 34 ✓

Real Estate Agent at Redfin
Seattle University

2020



COVID wedding



Embryo transfer



Successful IVF pregnancy

2021



2022: Calvin





2022:
also
Calvin

How to Write a Comprehensive, Research and Law-based Policy



#POLICYGOALS



Have a policy in place prior to any firefighter becoming pregnant. Better yet, before you hire a female FF.



If you are a chief and are presented with a policy or request for modified duty, please respond promptly.



Take a look at the *Gold Standard* and ask yourself how well your own department's policy compares.

3 SECTIONS TO A POLICY

1

**PRECONCEPTION
TTC
ADOPTION**

2

PREGNANCY

3

POSTPARTUM

Preconception/Adoption

- TRYING TO CONCEIVE
- FERTILITY TREATMENT
- MISCARRIAGE/BEREAVEMENT LEAVE
- ADOPTION/FOSTERING
- RESOURCE GUIDE

Pregnancy

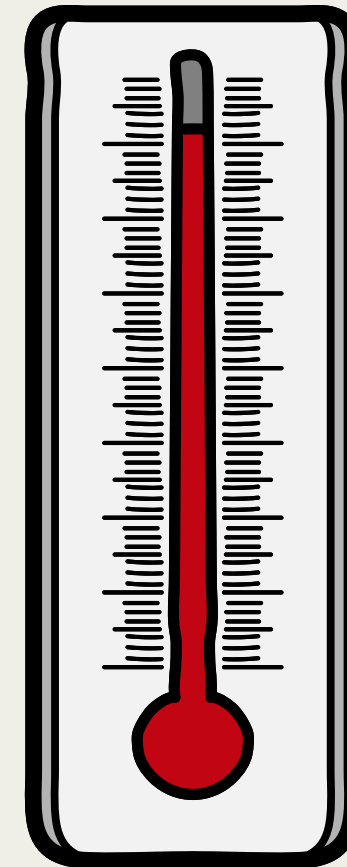
- SUPERVISOR NOTIFICATION
- EARLY PREGNANCY MODIFIED DUTY
- TRANSITION TO MODIFIED DUTY ONCE PREGNANT
- UNIFORM
- PREGNANCY AS A PROBATIONARY FIREFIGHTER
- PREPARING FOR MATERNITY LEAVE

Postpartum

- RETURN-TO-WORK FITNESS EVALUATION
- NURSING MOTHERS
- EXEMPTION FROM MANDATORY HIRING WHILE NURSING

Structure Summary.

- TRYING TO CONCEIVE
 - FERTILITY TREATMENT
 - MISCARRIAGE/BEREAVEMENT LEAVE
 - ADOPTION/FOSTERING
 - RESOURCE GUIDE
-
- SUPERVISOR NOTIFICATION
 - EARLY PREGNANCY MODIFIED DUTY
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-
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 - EXEMPTION FROM MANDATORY HIRING WHILE NURSING





Chief for a Day

- reproductive health policy
- paid parental leave
- fertility benefits
- pre-employment reproductive health screening
- letter to take to your OB
- letter from the fire chief to the pregnant employee
- reasonable accommodations
- resource guide
 - nutrition
 - exercise
 - resources
 - exposures education
- educate all new firefighters, including new recruits

NEED HELP?

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - PacNW

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US Department of Labor Wage & Hour Division (FMLA)

Stephen Yim, Community Outreach & Resource Planning Specialist

Yim.Stephen@dol.gov

Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (PFML)

LNI Community Relations Team

Silvina Birrueta

360-742-2974

Silvina.Birrueta@Lni.wa.gov

PROGYNY FERTILITY

New August 2023: IAFF HWT partners with Progyny to bring Trust Members a comprehensive and inclusive fertility and family building benefit.

Progyny Benefits Include:

- Comprehensive treatment and medication coverage
- Access to a premier network of fertility specialists
- Genetic testing and other advanced technology
- Personalized guidance and support from a dedicated Patient Care Advocate (PCA)

Common ways to use a Smart Cycle:



IVF Fresh Cycle



IVF Freeze-All Cycle



Frozen Embryo Transfer (FET)



Intrauterine Insemination (IUI) or Timed Intercourse



Pre-Transfer Embryology Services



IAFF Health & Wellness Trust



WWW.THEBELTANEGUILD.ORG

