

Fertile pastures: 12 startups that show tackling fertility is big business

These fertility treatment startups continue Femtech's mission of providing treatment to historically underserved areas, while simultaneously tackling the male fertility crisis. From an app that rates your sperm's motility in minutes, to a platform which seamlessly links employees with menopause specialists - there is a world of innovation happening in this space.

Temps de lecture : minute

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The fertility treatment sector is the latest health-tech niche to experience a buzz of activity. The explosion of interest in startups tackling fertility is predicted to turn into a \$45B global market by 2027 (double its 2020 value).

Predictably, rising infertility rates is the main driver of this: assisted reproduction is becoming increasingly normalised, as is people's desire to understand their own fertility. Despite the momentum in the US, the UK, as with Europe is yet to produce a huge success story. This looks likely to change, with a flurry of raising and acquisition activity taking place this year.

We've therefore profiled twelve startups involved in the fertility sector. Most of these tackle fertility head on: providing insights, diagnostics and route-to-care for fertility issues, often employing new tech solutions directly in their product offering, or indirectly - to streamline logistical issues present within traditional healthcare. Other startups exist more

loosely within the fertility space, and look holistically at how to aid sex and relationships generally.

The proliferation of these fertility startups builds on the financial viability established from companies in the wider femtech space. The continued success of Femtech demonstrates the very real need to provide a wide range of solutions to improve healthcare for women across a number of female-specific conditions, which were – and are still – underserved. The fact that up until the late 20th century women were often not included in clinical trials, means there are still large gaps in our understanding. It was announced only last week that a team of Swedish engineers has finally developed the first dummy designed on the body of the average woman. A dummy still often used as a proxy for women is a scaled-down version of the male one, roughly the size of a 12-year-old girl.

Fertility startups, however, crucially serve men and women. In fact, fertility has traditionally been one of the few areas in the female health space receiving any kind of meaningful funding. Indeed, declining fertility rates rank among the most pressing health concerns for men globally with infertility affects 3.5 million people in the UK alone (NHS data). Sperm counts are also understood to be almost half the level they were 40 years ago. Lifestyle is an often cited as a cause, alongside plastic consumption.

One irony of the focus on female fertility is that although one in seven British couples have difficulty conceiving (NHS); about 40% of the time it's a male issue causing the problem. The perception is still that it is a woman's issue: one recent study found 42% of British men had concerns about their fertility, but only 18% of men had considered a test. A third of the men also wanted the woman to test first.

This slight stigma around male fertility, then, combined with the way Covid has transformed the relationship between tech, healthcare and

wellbeing has nicely set the stage for a real boom in discreet, tech-enabled online male fertility treatment.

ExamenLabs

Examen is a leader in male fertility testing, with over 25 years in male reproductive health and fertility treatment research. They specialise in measuring sperm DNA fragmentation (known as sperm DNA damage) to help predict the likelihood of conception, miscarriage and the success of fertility treatment.

Semen analysis helps men understand their sperm count, motility and morphology, but semen analysis alone does not tell the full story. Sperm DNA damage is one of the most important factors causing male infertility. Examen has developed a range of sperm DNA diagnostics tests that empower men to take control of their own fertility.

Founded by an internationally acclaimed expert in male fertility; Professor Sheena Lewis, Examen's Exact range of tests, powered by SpermComet®, are the go-to tests for sperm DNA damage in 80% of the UK & Ireland's leading private fertility clinics.

“Over 40% of men with a normal semen analysis have sperm DNA damage, but often this isn't discovered until after IVF has failed... For men looking for answers straightaway, our Exact tests can save the time, money and heartache associated with infertility.” Professor Sheena Lewis, CEO, Examen

[Discover Examen](#)

Peppy

Peppy is a leading health app that connects employees to real, human experts, giving them the care and answers they need to take control of their health – enabling them to do their job happily and healthily. Peppy believes employees are silently trying to navigate their way through life-changing health concerns, every day at work: from unanswered questions that become something bigger, to major health challenges that leave them feeling like there's nowhere to turn.

Peppy's highly trained practitioners therefore support employees through underserved areas of health that fall through the gaps all too often – including menopause, fertility, having a baby, women's health and men's health. They offer expertise delivered with time, passion and empathy, reducing the health worries that cause employees to disengage, or even leave employment altogether.

Following their own experiences having children, the founders saw an opportunity to offer a solution for organisations looking to better support their people, and to differentiate themselves in a hyper-competitive market for talent. *And so Peppy was born.*

[Discover Peppy](#)

Kindbody

Kindbody is a leading fertility clinic network and family-building benefits provider for employers offering comprehensive virtual and in-person care. Kindbody delivers a seamless, integrated experience at a lower cost, making fertility care more affordable and accessible for all. They offer a full suite of fertility and wellness coaching services, and provide fertility

consultation, egg freezing, IVF, IUI, donor services, embryo banking, and embryo storage. Additionally, the company offers coaching appointments such as nutrition counselling and therapy sessions.

Kindbody's mission is therefore to transform fertility and family-building care, making it more accessible, intuitive, and empowering for all. The company leverages modern technology to deliver a quality client experience, improved outcomes, and reduced pricing for patients and employers. They serve patients and employers across the US, in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and nationally online and through our partner clinics.

Kindbody has now become a trusted employee benefits solution for more than 100 employers covering 2.4 million lives. Kindbody claims its success is due to its ability to drive down healthcare costs, attract and keep great talent, and build an inclusive workplace.

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ExSeed Health

Exceed Health is best known for its certified home sperm testing kit which offers accurate diagnostics equivalent to traditional fertility clinics.

British Standards Institute (BSI) approved ExSeed's state-of-the-art, smartphone-based sperm testing kit last year, clinically validating it as an in vitro diagnostic medical device. This demonstrated the progress being made in the at-home health tech sector, validating it for use across the European Economic Area and guaranteeing patients over 95% accuracy, meaning it's now in line with the accuracy offered by traditional fertility clinics. The at-home test doesn't require users to attend a doctors

surgery, clinic, or hospital facility and it comes with a lifestyle intervention program that has shown highly promising health improvement rates.

ExSeed's testing kit marries the powerful camera capabilities of modern smartphones with sophisticated, cloud-based analysis, providing patients with a live view of their sperm sample directly on their screen and highly accurate quantitative analysis of their sperm concentration and motility in just 3-5 minutes. The results are paired with additional behavioural and diet data to generate a bespoke lifestyle program that helps would-be dads improve their sperm quality over a 90-day period.

[Discover ExSeed](#)

Fertifa

Fertifa helps employers offer support, clinical advice, financing and benefits for fertility, family forming, sexual and hormonal health, menopause and men's reproductive health.

Fertifa therefore acts as something of a *digital fertility clinic for employees*. On the individual side of the platform, people can browse specialists and make appointments in person or through video consultation, message with a fertility advisor, manage the whole scope of their fertility journey, purchase at-home fertility testing kits, and read up on Fertifa's educational materials.

For employers, the platform acts as a hub for data analytics, employee feedback and corporate administration. All of the information on the employer platform is confidential and anonymous to allow employers to see how their members use and like the services without sharing personal health information. The startup already provides fertility support for more

than 700,000 UK employees, and has plans to increase that number - particularly within the U.K. and Europe.

[Discover Fertifa](#)

Béa Fertility

Béa Fertility founded by the embryologist David O'Rourke and *femtech* specialist Tess Cosad democratises effective and affordable fertility treatment for individuals and couples who are struggling to conceive.

These couples have two choices: Intrauterine Insemination (IUI) or In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) treatments, *which are expensive* and take physical and emotional toll (some individuals are eligible for IVF treatment through the NHS, but meeting the range of criteria is difficult).

Béa Fertility is changing this through its innovation "IntraCervical Insemination" (ICI), a treatment done at home. Béa's ICI method involves placing a small cup of semen close to the cervix, where it's left in situ for 4-12 hours. During that time, women can go about their days normally. After an exhaustive design process, the Béa team now believes that their product will increase the chances of conception by 40% if used over 3 months and 60% if used over 6 months (Béa's ICI has scientifically proven efficacy rates as IUI treatments).

[Discover Béa Fertility](#)

Gaia

Gaia is a London-based startup focusing on de-risking the whole IVF fertility treatment with tailored products such as payment plans or personalised insurance (think of it as buy now pay later for conceiving). As well as insurance and payment plans, Gaia says it has a predictive technology that predicts the number of rounds a couple will likely need in addition to the clinics that can offer the right treatment, based on clinical data set

In a statement, Gaia CEO and founder Nader AlSalim said: “The fertility care model as we know it today is broken because the gap between those who want access to fertility treatments and those who can afford access is greater than ever. Three out of four people who seek fertility treatment never start because they believe the financial burden would be too large. With only one in seven people in the UK and US who require IVF being able to access it, we need to rethink how people access, experience, and pay for treatments which are physically and mentally taxing.”

He says Gaia’s model means that those who do not have a live birth in the rounds subject to Gaia’s prediction technology pay lower costs for the treatment. And those that do have a baby spread the cost of their total treatment cycles into monthly payments, which makes it easier to plan the whole cost.

[Discover Gaia](#)

Daye

Daye is a female health platform best known for its CBD-infused tampons. It has just raised a £10M Series A, with ambitions to launch its at-

home vaginal microbiome testing platform and US expansion.

Daye's mission is to transform gynaecological health by working with clinicians to do in-depth research and build out a platform that's designed to open up an overlooked and neglected 'Pandora's Box' of intimate female health issues and put women in the driving seat over choices affecting their bodies and lives.

Daye's first product — a *CBD-infused cramp-fighting tampon*, launched in 2019. Through this, the company amassed 60,000 subscribers for its direct-to-consumer product, selling “fully sustainable” organic tampons produced to “medical device standards”, featuring eco innovations like a flushable, biodegradable wrapper and a non-plastic (sugarcane) applicator. Now aiming to tackle the broader “gynae” health mission, it is now rolling out the next pieces of the plan with the launch of a tampon-based at-home vaginal microbiome screening kit which it describes as a “world first”.

[Discover Daye](#)

Apricity

Apricity is a UK virtual fertility clinic which offers a range of *digital and at-home services for people who are struggling to conceive*, which include consultations and diagnostics tests. It also has an app, which provides extra information on fertility issues and offers packages for egg freezing, IVF and egg donation, among others. Launched in 2018, the startup is aiming to herald a new approach to reproductive medicine – combining fertility care with technology to increase the chances of conception in a bid to outperform more traditional clinics, while offering a smoother patient experience.

Apricity's tech team recently developed first-of-its-kind AI algorithms that identify the most suitable fertility treatment for patients and then determine the best embryo for selection through 3D reconstruction. Apricity is the first company to develop 3D reconstruction technology for embryos to assist fertility treatments.

With one in six couples having difficulty conceiving, Apricity claims a 46% success rate per cycle, compared to a UK average of 31%.

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Blueheart

Blueheart is a digital sex therapy app aiming to put relationship health on the public health agenda.

The London-headquartered company's app, which uses "smart algorithms" to create bespoke relationship therapy, has been used by 50,000 couples across more than 150 countries. The sex tech startup raised more than £1M in seed funding in July 2020.

Founder Sachin Raoul has says the Blueheart apps "offers a digital version of what you would do with a human therapist". Users fill out an assessment form which an AI uses to develop a base-line star chart, therapy plan and targets. "We look at eight different markers from communication to physical intimacy, and that pinpoints what the focus areas are going to be. The therapy plan gets loaded into the app and that takes you through exercises we feel confident will work for you," Raoul says. A call with a live therapist was offered as part of the package, but only one per cent of users took up the offer.

Hanx

Launched in 2017 by childhood friends Farah Kabir and Dr Sarah Welsh, *HANX is trying to revolutionise the world of sexual and intimate care.*

From ultra-thin, vegan, biodegradable condoms to water-based, latex-friendly lubricant, their signature sexual wellness essentials are natural, gynae-backed and have received global coverage which reflects this.

In 2021, Hanx launched a pioneering same-day-dispatch hormonal contraceptive pill service, including the morning after pill, joining a range of intimate health treatments. Aimed to tackle COVID-induced sexual health and GP appointment backlogs, it offers a convenient, accessible solution alongside trustworthy resources for their 65,000 community.

We offer discreet, same-day-dispatch shipping in the UK and US. HANX condoms and lubricant is stocked in 2000+ retail sites with leading retailers including Boots, Tesco, Sainsbury's, WHSmith and Superdrug.

[Discover Hanx](#)

Hertility

The UK startup, launched in September 2020, offers a machine-learning healthcare solution, giving women insight on their reproductive health, through an at-home hormone test, individual results and a route to care. Founded by scientists and powered by an (all female) research team, Hertility is building a science-backed eco-system of care around every woman.

Hertility is shaping the future of reproductive healthcare by pioneering unique diagnostic testing that provides data-driven and advanced insights into reproductive health, fertility decline and the onset of menopause. A typical fertility check-up consultation can cost you up to £1,800 and take up to 15 months: Hertility is changing that.

Hertility is planning on launching in Ireland this summer and the Netherlands before the end of the year and is already offering end to end gynae and fertility care with a team of over 30 experts. They recently acquired the Netherlands-based fertility and hormone testing company Grip to make this happen, increasing their market share in the women's health space and positioning them for rapid international expansion. Hertility said the acquisition will expand its own dataset and help them reach their goal of drastically cutting down the time to diagnosis of female health conditions.

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