

According to Purity Wako, a nutritionist and dietician, there are different tests you can do to ascertain milk freshness.

Smell the milk: Spoiled milk has a foul sour smell. Check the consistency, pure milk is a thin and smooth liquid. If the

cream separates the milk and bacteria, it does take on a more whiter appearance.

Boil a sample: It is very essential to check and verify the "best before" date written at the back of the carton or packet, before consumption. Scientists recommend using milk before three

months. After, you can pour the milk in a transparent glass and observe it against the light. If the colour is anything but white, your milk has gone bad.

Preservation

To preserve your milk, make sure, if it is sitting out, it is only at the recommended 39 degree F (4 degree C). If it is not in use, do keep the milk back into the refrigerator to preserve it for long.

Knowledge of your partner's health status enables you and your spouse to seek proper medical care early to prevent unnecessary stress and burden during marriage.

BY BEATRICE NAKIBUUKA
bnakibuuka@ug.nationmedia.com

Stella Mutonyi* lost her first child three months into the pregnancy. For about three years, she miscarried all her pregnancies and this risked her marriage because her in-laws demanded to know why she did not have a child.

"I stopped going for baby showers and visiting friends who had given birth. I wanted to give up and ask for a divorce until a friend and doctor told me to do a blood group screening with my husband," she says. From the screening, the couple had a rhesus incompatibility and when this was treated, she had her first baby. Dr Henry Ddunga, a consultant haematologist at Uganda Cancer Institute, says knowledge of possible genetic or chronic conditions of your partner will go a long way in allowing you to prepare for the challenges ahead.

Gene disorders

Dr Ddunga says it is important to ask about the explicit single-gene disorders, such as cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anaemia and bleeding disorders such as thalassemia and haemophilia A and B. "This may feel uncomfortable, but not only are you protecting your partner, you are also educating yourself about the genes that may cause future problems in your marriage or pose challenges for your children," he says.

Haemophilia

Hemophilia is an inherited bleeding disorder characterised by episodes of prolonged bleeding following injuries or can occur spontaneously. The main cause is lack of enough clotting factor, a blood protein that is key in the process of blood clotting. Haemophilia is a sex linked gene and it is carried on the X chromosome. The women are usually carriers but do not suffer from the disease. However, men usually suffer from the disease because they have one X chromosome.

If a male who has haemophilia marries a woman who is normal, they will give birth to daughters that are carriers of the disease and normal sons. If a female carrier marries a normal male, they have a chance of giving birth to a carrier daughter and a son that suffers haemophilia as well as a normal son and daughter.

Sickle cell gene

Sickle cell disease makes the red blood cells sickle shaped which affects their ability to pass through tiny blood vessels to supply oxygen to body cells and tissues. Dr Philip Kasirye, the head of Sickle Cell Clinic at Mulago Hospital, says, "It

Tests you should do before tying the knot



is not advisable for sickle cell patients to marry a carrier of the sickle cell gene because there is 50 per cent chance of having a baby with the disease in each pregnancy. However, a sickle cell patient (SS) can marry an individual with no trait of the disease (AA), as their offspring will only be carriers of the sickle cell genes and will not suffer the pain episodes sicklers usually experience."

Blood group

Dr Ddunga says blood group is assigned to an individual as A, B, O and AB. However, another component known as the Rhesus factor, which is referred to as positive or negative are important for you to find out. If you are both positive and negative for the Rhesus factor, your blood groups will be compatible and you will not get problems with giving birth. This is also true if the mother is positive and the father is negative.

However, Dr Ddunga says, "If a woman with rhesus negative blood group marries a rhesus positive husband, they have a greater chance of rhesus incompatibility, where the mother's body produces a body defense system to target the red blood cells of the growing foetus. The foetus receives incompatible blood and this would lead to intrauterine death and miscarriages."

In some instances, Dr Ddunga says that the first pregnancy may not be affected by the incompatibility problem but the subsequent pregnancies are likely to be affected because the problem increases with time. The condition makes the mother's body to treat the foetus as a foreign body and will be expelled.

"Although this is treatable with Rhesus Immunoglobulin at seven months of pregnancy and 72 hours after delivery to prepare for the subsequent births, it is important for you to know," he warns.

Early testing allows couples to seek medical care before the medical conditions become terminal. NET PHOTO

STDs

Engaged couples should have full disclosure of health issues prior to marriage especially about Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). Besides the obvious concerns about a personal contraction of a disease, the couple should know that the diseases can cause problems with conceiving later in life especially in severe cases.

Dr Joseph Nsengiyumva, a gynaecologist at Bethany Women's Hospital, says majority of people with sexually transmitted infections do not know that they have the infection.

It is important that you get tests of STDs done to save you the turmoil of treating the disease at a late stage that lead to infertility and suspicion of infidelity yet you may have had the disease before you actually got married.

Nsengiyumva says, "With the current prevalence of HIV and other STDs, it is important that spouses request for their partners to be screened for these diseases before marriage. Lifelong conditions like HIV, hepatitis B and C if not properly managed, can put serious strain on the marriage with difficulties in conception."

There are people who consent to marriage even after the other partner tests positive for HIV and knowledge of a partner's status helps you to protect yourself and seek adequate and safe medical care for you and the children you may have so you do not get infected with the disease. In such cases, lifelong medical support is needed for partners who are infected. Other STDs you should look out for include gonorrhea, syphilis, bacterial vaginosis and warts. These once caught should be treated with proper medication to reduce the risk of infertility and complications during marriage.