

MANUAL WORK, NIGHT SHIFTS MAY HARM WOMEN'S EGGS

PARIS: Women who work nights and do heavy lifting on the job may have fewer and inferior eggs than nine-to-fivers, said a study yesterday into a potential cause of infertility. Previous research had shown a link between work conditions and fertility, but this was the first attempt to examine how shift work or manual labor might affect a woman's physical capacity to have a baby, the authors said.

The US-based team analyzed data from about 400 women attending a Massachusetts fertility clinic. Their average age was 35. The researchers assessed "ovarian reserve"—the number of remaining eggs a woman had—as well as levels of a hormone which rise as fertility dwindles. They also examined how many eggs were "mature" and capable of developing into a healthy embryo. This data was compared to the women's job conditions—how much physical exertion was required of them, and the hours that they worked.

About 40 percent of women said they had to regularly move or lift heavy objects, while a fifth said their jobs were moderately to very physically demanding. Ninety-one percent worked during normal office hours. "Women with physically demanding jobs had a lower reserve of eggs than those whose work did not regularly require heavy lifting," said a press statement from the journal *Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, which published the study.

Heavy lifters also had fewer mature eggs—even fewer if they worked evening, night or rotation shifts. The effect was strongest in overweight women and those older than 37, the researchers said. Women are believed to be born with a finite number of eggs, which steadily die off over time—a process which can be accelerated by factors such as smoking, for example.

The team merely observed a correlation between work conditions and egg health, and cannot say with certainty that one causes the other. They also cannot be sure that a similar correlation would be found in women not in need of fertility treatment. Other experts not involved in the research pointed out other potential flaws. With fewer than 500 women, the study was too small to rule out other possible causes for reduced egg quantity or quality. "For example, it is possible that they (shift workers and heavy-lifters) were poorer and therefore had different social conditions or diet compared with the nine-to-five workers," said Channa Jayasena of Imperial College London. — AFP



FAREWELL SPIT, New Zealand : This handout photo from the New Zealand Department of Conservation taken and released yesterday shows pilot whales, which beached themselves overnight, at Farewell Spit in the Golden Bay region at the northern tip of New Zealand's South Island.—AFP

HUNDREDS OF WHALES WASH UP DEAD ON NEW ZEALAND BEACH

WELLINGTON: More than 400 whales were stranded on a New Zealand beach yesterday, with most of them dying quickly as frustrated volunteers desperately raced to save the survivors. It was one of the largest mass beachings recorded in New Zealand, where strandings are relatively common, the Department of Conservation said. Andrew Lamason, the department's regional manager, said 416 pilot whales swam ashore at Farewell Spit in the Golden Bay region, on the northern tip of South Island.

About 70 percent had perished by the time wildlife officers reached the remote location and about 500 volunteers pitched in to get the remaining whales offshore. However, he conceded the outlook was gloomy and by late afternoon the majority of the 100-plus whales that were refloated at high tide had swam back ashore. "With that number dead, you have to assume that the rest are in reasonably poor nick as well," he told Radio New Zealand. "So we're sort of preparing ourselves for a pretty traumatic period ahead." Department

spokesman Herb Christophers said there were so many whale carcasses that it was difficult for the volunteers to get living animals into the water.

"The dead ones that are floating around out there are obstructing their course out to sea," he told AFP. "I understand they're concerned about people's welfare... there's quite a safety issue there." The volunteers at the beach were also advised to be wary of the thrashing tails and fins of the distressed whales, which can weigh up to two tonnes. Pilot whales grow up to six meters (20 feet) long and are the most common species of whale in New Zealand waters. They are renowned for tragically swimming back ashore after being refloated in an apparent attempt to rejoin their pod.

Volunteers will again attempt to refloat any survivors on Saturday. In the past, whales that repeatedly re-strand have been euthanized after becoming steadily weaker with every attempt to return them to the sea. —AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF



Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم



Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM



Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368