

The Perfect Embryo

April 4, 2003 — For many couples, having a baby is a dream. But for others it can also be a source of great disappointment and emotional ups and downs. Now, a new procedure takes away some of the guess work and does away with procedures that are doomed to unknowingly fail.

"He's just amazing. We call him our miracle baby." A miracle that almost did not happen. "We almost walked away."

This couple tried for two years to have a baby. Doctors suggested in vitro fertilization. In the midst of their grief, they said no.

"Like an hour later we came back and we said, okay, we changed our mind, we're going to do it."

Their doctor, Larry Werlin, offered a procedure that would ease some of their anxiety.

"It's made us take another look at how we evaluate things," said the couple.

Instead of relying on the appearance of the embryos to decide which to implant, PGD tests for chromosome abnormalities - a major problem in women over age thirty-eight, those who have recurrent pregnancy loss, and women who failed in vitro.

"In those groups we have now data that shows that perhaps as much as 70 percent of the embryos they make are abnormal," said Larry Werlin, M.D., Infertility Specialist, Coastal Fertility, Irvine, CA.

Embryos like this one that looks perfect but has an extra chromosome... or this one that had multiple abnormalities.

"This would have been an unsuccessful implantation or a probable early pregnancy loss," said Larry Werlin, M.D.

For this mother, PGD proved the emotional winner.

"Just to see him and know he's ours, it's just amazing."

For dad, the proof is in the numbers. "Our odds increased 84 fold just by doing the PGD."

And for the doctor, it comes down to the end product. "What a beautiful little guy."

Doctor Werlin points out PGD is not for everyone. His new research will determine whom it can help. So far, it seems most effective in women with recurrent pregnancy loss and does not seem to make a difference in woman of advanced maternal age - over thirty-eight.