

8 Simple and Effective Ways to Boost Your Fertility...Naturally

By: Caroline La, L.Ac., Dipl.OM

It is estimated that 1 out of 7 couples in the US suffer from infertility which is defined as the inability to conceive after trying for one year (or two years according to some sources). Before resorting to more invasive and expensive procedures such as IVF, why not get your body back on track and help it conceive naturally on its own? Here are 8 tips to help you naturally boost your fertility and increase your chances of getting pregnant:

1. Say “Yes” to Acupuncture and Chinese Herbs

Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture has been used for thousands of years in China to help couples conceive. It provides a safe, drug-free, and natural approach to treating infertility. Both acupuncture and Chinese herbs has been shown to help with conception by:

- Reducing anxiety and stress which are both known to significantly decrease fertility.
- Regulating hormones and the endocrine system to help with proper ovulation.
- Increasing blood flow to the uterus which improves the chances of an embryo implanting in the uterus.
- Regulating the menstrual cycle.
- Improving egg quality in women and sperm motility and count in men.

Chinese medicine can also help treat the underlying cause of your infertility such as endometriosis, polycystic ovarian syndrome, high FSH, and luteal phase defect. Chinese herbs and acupuncture may be used alone or in combination with western medical ART procedures.

2. Exercise...in Moderation

We all know that exercise is an important part of keeping healthy; however if you're looking to optimize your fertility, too much exercise can actually work against you. Too much exercise can stress a woman's reproductive system causing it to inhibit ovulation and/or interfere with the implantation of an embryo. Aim for low-to-moderate intensity exercise such as brisk walking for 30-45 minutes up to 3-5 times per week.

3. Watch Your Diet

If you're trying to get pregnant it's an especially good idea to eat organic as much as possible, especially with meat products to avoid unnecessary chemicals and hormones. It's also important to limit foods that can have a rapid effect on your insulin levels since insulin resistance has a strong correlation with fertility problems. Foods that cause a rapid spike in insulin levels include refined carbohydrates (i.e. white breads), sugar, soda, and candies. A recent study has also shown that full-fat dairy products tend to be better than low-fat when it comes to optimizing fertility, so next time you're at the market, reach for the whole-fat milk or yogurt instead of the low or non-fat variety.

4. Take High Quality Prenatal Vitamins

It's a good idea to take a high quality multi-vitamin supplement starting 3-6 months prior to your plans to conceive. This helps fill any nutritional gaps in your diet and ensures you're getting the proper amount of folic acid, B12, and iron which are all important for fertility and a healthy pregnancy. Just make sure your supplement has at least 400mcg of folic acid and

17mg of iron or take prenatal multi-vitamins which should typically have the proper amounts of required vitamins and minerals for mothers-to-be.

5. Limit Caffeine and Alcohol, Don't Smoke

Excessive caffeine or alcohol consumption has been shown to adversely affect fertility and may increase the chances of a miscarriage. While consuming a little bit of caffeine or alcohol shouldn't affect fertility too much, limit yourself to no more than 1 cup of caffeine a day and 1 glass of wine. Or try tea such as green tea or white tea which contains caffeine, but in a much smaller amount.

6. Reduce Stress

Stress sets the body in 'flight or fight' mode. When we are chronically stressed whether it be from work, school, or an illness; our adrenal glands pump out excess cortisol which can affect fertility. Learn how to manage your stress by practicing meditation, yoga, or qigong. Weekly acupuncture sessions can also help reduce anxiety and stress decreasing the amount of cortisol in your system.

7. Watch your weight.

Maintaining a healthy weight is an important aspect in a woman's ability to conceive. Being overweight or underweight can negatively affect your chances of getting pregnant. Studies show that a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 19-24 in women is the ideal body weight for fertility. Click on this link to calculate your Body Mass Index and see where you're at:

<http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/> .

8. Avoid unnecessary medications and drugs, if possible.

Common medications such as anti-histamines and NSAIDs (i.e. Aspirin, Advil) have the potential to interfere with a woman's ability to conceive. Although studies have been conflicting, long-term use of NSAIDs has been shown to cause ovulation problems in some women by delaying or inhibiting ovulation. Anti-histamines such as Claritin can dry up a woman's cervical mucus thereby creating a hostile environment for sperms. In both cases, fertility can be adversely affected therefore it's best to take medications only when necessary. If you have questions about the current medications you are taking, consult your doctor or healthcare practitioner.

Caroline La, L.Ac., Dipl.OM practices at Coastal Acupuncture and Natural Health Center in Costa Mesa where she specializes in treating women's health issues, natural fertility, and supports assisted reproductive treatments such as intra-uterine insemination and in-vitro fertilization.

Coastal Acupuncture and Natural Health Center (CANH) offers integrative care that blends the best of western and eastern medicine. CANH specializes in family medicine, women's health, infertility, and pain management. Partnering with several fertility centers throughout Orange County, they are the leading center for natural fertility, in vitro fertilization support, and assisted reproductive therapy support. For more information about our services and to schedule an appointment, please call (949) 646-4325 or visit our website,

www.coastalacupuncture.com.