

Acupuncture and Reproductive Health

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Current statistics state that one in five couples over the age of 30 have difficulty conceiving after one year of trying. Many of these couples are turning to acupuncture and Oriental medicine for a safe, effective and natural solution to have a healthy baby.

Oriental medicine has a long history when it comes to enhancing fertility for both men and women. In fact, evidence that acupuncture and herbal medicine have been used to aid fertility can be found in early medical literature dating back to 3AD.

Fertility treatments were first recorded by Zhang Zhong Jing, a famous physician from the Han Dynasty, in his discussion of diseases in women in the *Jin Gui Yao Lue* or *Essentials of the Golden Cabinet*.

How Acupuncture Can Enhance Fertility

According to the principles of Oriental medicine, a person's health is determined by the quality of Qi, the vital life energy, and blood circulating through the body. When Qi and blood are circulating properly, the body is properly nourished and functioning optimally which, in turn, enhances fertility.

Researchers have confirmed its benefit in the following areas:

- Regulate menstrual cycle.
- Improve sperm count and motility.
- Reduce stress and anxiety associated with infertility.
- Normalize hormone and endocrine systems.
- Improve blood flow in the uterus.
- Decrease chance of miscarriage.
- Increase the chance of pregnancy for women undergoing in vitro fertilization (IVF).

Fertility treatments vary from person to person, but are usually scheduled for at least three consecutive cycles (twelve weeks). Treatments can include acupuncture, customized herbal therapy, stress reduction and dietary counseling. Treatments work alone but are an excellent addition to any Western intervention.

Please call an acupuncturist near you for more information of to schedule a consultation. The best place to find a qualified and licensed acupuncture practitioner is on Acufinder.com.

Acupuncture Increases IVF Success by 65%

Women undergoing IVF were 65 percent more likely to become pregnant when they combined the procedure with acupuncture, a recent study has shown.

The remarkable success rate occurred across seven acupuncture trials involving 1,366 women in a systematic review and meta-analysis published in a February, 2008 issue of the *British Medical Journal*.

Acupuncture was delivered either just before or just after embryo transfer – a step in the process of in vitro fertilization (IVF) whereby one or several embryos are placed into the uterus.

The research was carried out by scientists from the University of Maryland in the United States and the VU University of Amsterdam in Holland.

It is thought that acupuncture stimulates the neurotransmitters that trigger the production of gonadotrophin-releasing hormone, which controls the menstrual cycle and a woman's ovulation.

Acupuncture is also thought to stimulate blood flow to the uterus and boost the production of endogenous opioids, inducing the body to relax.

Acupuncture Improves Sperm Quality

A study published in the July 2005 issue of the journal *Fertility and Sterility* found that acupuncture helped infertile men by apparently helping improve sperm quality in their semen.

In the research project, 28 men received acupuncture in addition to traditional infertility treatments, while another 12 men received only the traditional treatments. All of the men were diagnosed with infertility of unknown origin.

Acupuncture was associated with fewer structural defects in the sperm of men who received it, although it had no effect on other abnormalities, such as sperm immaturity or premature death.

Previous studies have shown a link between acupuncture and improved sperm production and motility.

Foods for Fertility

"Your body is like a garden... As in all gardens, the seed we hope to plant in our bodies grows best when we cultivate the ground and plant and nurture the seed in harmony with the laws of nature. You wouldn't put a tender plant in clay soil without first tilling and amending the earth - at least not if you wanted to give that plant its best start. You wouldn't plant in the dead of winter, or in the dry season without water, or in a sunless place. Likewise, if we tend our bodies, minds, and spirits with an awareness of the laws of nature, we improve our chances of welcoming the gifts of Quan Yin, the fertility goddess." Angela Wu, L.Ac., author of *Fertility Wisdom*.

Black Beans

According to Oriental medicine, the energy of the Kidney system is important for reproduction and fertility enhancement often starts with the Kidneys. A good example of a food that nourishes the Kidneys and promotes fertility is black beans.

Health Benefits of Black Beans

From an Eastern perspective, black beans are warming in nature. They are thought to tonify the Kidney Qi and nourish Yin and Blood.

From a Western perspective, black beans are an excellent source of protein, folate, iron and fiber and are rich in antioxidants.

Loaded with Antioxidants

World's Healthiest Foods reported on research published in the Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry indicating that black beans are as rich in antioxidant compounds called anthocyanins as grapes and cranberries, fruits long considered antioxidant superstars.

When researchers analyzed different types of beans, they found that, the darker the bean's seed coat, the higher its level of antioxidant activity. Gram for gram, black beans were found to have the most antioxidant activity, followed in descending order by red, brown, yellow, and white beans.

Overall, the level of antioxidants found in black beans in this study is approximately 10 times that found in an equivalent amount of oranges, and comparable to that found in an equivalent amount of grapes or cranberries.

Sources:

British Medical Journal, February 2008

Fertility and Sterility, July 2005

Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry, November 2003