



Center for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine, P.A.

INFERTILITY

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine have been used for centuries to successfully address the sensitive complexities of infertility by restoring balance and creating an environment in which new life can flourish. Any difficulty in conceiving or maintaining a pregnancy is evidence of an imbalance that needs to be addressed and is often accompanied by other symptoms that may seem completely unrelated to infertility. Since our goal as Chinese medicine practitioners is not only to enable pregnancy, but to create an ideal environment to produce a new life, we seek to establish a complete health profile. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of each individual from a holistic perspective, it is possible to successfully treat infertility *and* improve one's overall health.

Although acupuncture is based on ancient medical theory, a modern and scientific neuroendocrine perspective has also begun to confirm its efficacy. Acupuncture and Chinese medicine can enhance fertility in a number of ways:

- Regulating the menstrual cycle
- Regulating hormone levels
- Increasing blood flow to the uterus
- Improving the function of the ovaries
- Improving sperm numbers, quality and motility
- Increasing libido
- Reversing ejaculatory defects and erectile dysfunction
- Treating blocked fallopian tubes
- Enhancing response to IVF and Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) procedures
- Relaxing the patient and alleviating stress
- Preventing miscarriage

Infertility can be due to a variety of factors. Some of the leading causes of infertility are advanced age, heredity, poor diet, overwork, insufficient rest, illness, poor menstrual health and stress. Very often, modern diagnostic techniques may not recognize any laboratory abnormality or functional cause for infertility, but readily resort to fertility drugs and medically assisted reproduction technologies when they are not necessary. A Chinese medicine practitioner can detect the subtle disharmonies within each individual that are responsible for impairing the reproductive process. Acupuncture and herbal therapies are a gentle and effective way of reversing some of these disharmonies without the physical and emotional angst that is associated with modern medical intervention.

From a Chinese medicine perspective, there are two primary patterns for infertility:

- 1) Stagnation: the blockage of *qi* and/or blood flow anywhere in the body that can manifest as symptoms such as PMS, painful periods, irritability, fibroid tumors, cysts, endometriosis and blocked tubes. Stress is frequently a factor in these instances.
- 2) Deficiency: a broad term used to describe a condition in which there is insufficient *qi, blood, yin or yang* to properly nourish the body and its reproductive capacity. Deficient conditions often manifest as weakness and fatigue, inadequate hormone levels, low sperm count or poor motility, hereditary ailments, and threatened miscarriage.

A Chinese medicine practitioner uses a variety of diagnostic techniques, including a detailed pulse and tongue evaluation, to determine the root imbalance that is responsible for hampering the reproductive process. Once this is established, he or she develops a treatment plan that incorporates acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine and nutrition and lifestyle counseling. In this way, a practitioner is able to treat symptoms that occur on a variety of levels all at once. Since treatments and lifestyle modifications are geared towards restoring balance, patients frequently report experiencing beneficial “side effects”, such as improved sleep and digestion as well as reduced stress levels. Women will generally observe fewer symptoms and more regularity in their menstrual cycles as balance is restored.

Since each new life relies on his or her parents for health and a strong constitution, we advise our patients to consider their overall health as they begin to consider conceiving a child. Take the time to get healthy and strong so that you can pass that health along to your child.

OTHER WAYS TO ENHANCE YOUR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

- Eliminate nicotine, caffeine, drugs and alcohol.
- Replace refined, processed foods with whole, fresh foods free of hormones, refined sugars or synthetic sweeteners.
- Eat sufficient green vegetables, which can provide omega-3 fatty acids, folic acid, magnesium and chlorophyll for a healthy pregnancy.
- Incorporate moderate exercise, outdoors if possible, in sunlight and fresh air.
- Avoid over-consumption of cold or raw foods (including cold drinks), particularly during menstruation
- Moderate sexual activity and get proper rest

FOODS TO ENHANCE FERTILITY

asparagus: eases menstrual difficulty and promotes fertility

walnuts: nourishes kidneys and adrenals and enriches sperm

lycium fruit, sesame seeds: strengthens Liver and Kidneys; promotes fertility

chestnut: strengthens the Kidneys, warms the uterus

black beans : tonifies Kidneys and reproductive function

coconut: increases semen, builds yin fluids

BERRIES, ESPECIALLY RASPBERRIES, BLACKBERRIES AND BLUEBERRIES

- Most nuts, seeds and berries are believed to enhance reproductive function.