

Fruitful thoughts

Natural ways you and your partner can optimize fertility.

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Pregnancy is a touching moment in an expectant mom and dad's life together. However, while some couples get pregnant at the drop of a hat, others seem to have a more difficult time conceiving. Infertility is described as not being able to conceive after having one year of unprotected sex. There are many causes for infertility such as: medication, chemical exposure, chronic diseases, cancer, sexually transmitted infections and endocrine diseases.

Approximately 50 percent of infertility is attributed to female factors, 35 percent to male factors and 10 to 15 percent is unexplained. Getting the right therapy (not including advanced techniques such as in vitro fertilization) allows pregnancy to occur in 50 to 60 percent of infertile couples. Without any treatment, 15 to 20 percent of infertile couples will eventually become pregnant. While there is no magical cure to change the state of your fertility, there are ways to optimize your chances of getting pregnant.

DE-STRESS

When it comes to infertility, it's not uncommon for partners to blame one another; this only adds additional stress, which makes conception that much harder. Consider setting a date for you and your partner — go for a long walk, watch a funny movie and try to appreciate the small things in each other.

You and your partner can also enroll in stress management programs to control stress

rather than letting it control you. Deep breathing and meditation are wonderful for calming your mind. Yoga can help free your mind of negative energy and provides both spiritual and mental balance.

A CLEAN LIFESTYLE

To balance out your hormones, eat a diet rich in fruit, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains, nuts and seeds. Consuming organic foods will also help lessen your chemical load. Also, try limiting your intake of caffeine and alcohol as they can reduce sperm count and prevent fertilized eggs from implanting.

SUPPLEMENT SUGGESTIONS

Essential fatty acids (EFAs) are extremely imperative for men and women. In women, EFAs encourage the production of eggs while in men, they help produce prostaglandins in semen. (Low sperm count and poor sperm quality is due to inadequate levels of prostaglandins.) Try to aim for two to three servings of fatty fish such as wild salmon, herring and mackerel. If fish is not for you, try one gram of high quality fish oil with a mixed EPA/DHA ratio.

(Consider refraining from fish oil if you are on any blood-thinning medications.)

A good quality multi-vitamin or multi-mineral formula is beneficial for both partners. Folic acid is essential for women to prevent neural tube defects during pregnancy. Also, folic acid is shown to boost the quality and quantity of sperm in men. In 2001, a study revealed that folic acid appears to be able to prevent breaks in the chromosomes, which may explain its sperm-boosting effects. If you have a further problem in sperm production, try zinc supplementation, which is known to increase sperm count and motility.

Don't hesitate to talk to your health care provider and disclose all the medications and supplements you are taking. Infertility comes with its own set of stresses. However, you and your partner can support each other by adopting a healthy diet and lifestyle. ♥

REFERENCES

Balch, Phyllis A. CNC. *Prescription for Nutritional Healing*. New York, NY: Avery, 2000 p.463-466. Goldstein Lisa. *Every Woman, The Essential Guide for Healthy Living*. Profile Pursuit: NY. 2000. p.166.

NOTE
Don't forget to consult your health care practitioner for any health concerns.

BONUS TIP

According to the *Mayo Clinic*, workplace and household substances could impact sperm quantity and quantity due to the chemicals found in solvents. You and your partner can opt for natural cleaners and skin care products in the home to reduce your intake of chemicals.