

Patient Help Sheet

TCM and Infertility

Here are some tips that you can use to help balance and support your health during this time. Please feel free to call me if you have further questions or concerns.

"Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." - Hippocrates

About one in 10 couples in the United States struggle with infertility. Infertility is defined as an inability to get pregnant after 12 months of actively trying to conceive. There are numerous known causes of infertility, but often the cause is unknown. Biomedical treatments for infertility include hormonal injections and assisted reproductive technologies such as IUI (intrauterine insemination) and IVF (in vitro fertilization.)

If you are struggling to get pregnant, either on your own or with treatments like IUI or IVF, it can be very taxing both physically and emotionally. Here are some suggestions of things to do at home to increase your chances of conception and to make the whole process more bearable.

Learn Your Cycles:

If your infertility is undiagnosed, or unexplained it is very important you start paying attention to your menstrual cycles. A healthy menstrual cycle should be 28 to 32 days, and you should bleed for four to seven days. Ideally, you won't have any cramps or discomfort with the period, and bleeding will not be overly heavy or too light. Blood will be fresh red and will not have any clots. If your periods differ from this in any way, it can be a sign of subtle changes the body needs to make in order to conceive and carry a child. You should learn how to tell when ovulation occurs. Many women can tell when they ovulate based on a change in vaginal discharge, or by their basal body temperature. You can also use over the counter ovulation kits to test when ovulation is occurring.

Acupressure Points:



Stomach 36 - Known as Leg 3 miles because soldiers used to burn moxa over this point to give endurance to walk 3 more miles even when exhausted. St36 is one of the most tonifying points in the body and Qin Cheng-zu of the Song dynasty declared "Using St36, all diseases can be treated." St36 is the command point of the abdomen and is especially helpful harmonizing the stomach and strengthening digestion. St36 is also known to help dizziness, especially post partum dizziness and hypertension. Breast pain and abscess can also be treated using ST36. To find this point measure the width of your 4 fingers from the top of your knee bone and one finger to the outside of your shin bone. Hint: Stimulate both legs first thing in the morning for an extra boost of energy and better digestion.



Gallbladder 41 - GB41 is the confluent point of the girdle vessel a channel that wraps around the waist helping to alleviate pain of the hip, lower leg, swelling of the feet, and contraction of the toes. GB41 also helps with fullness of the chest, headaches, distention and pain of the breasts. GB41 is also a great point to help assist conception. I especially like to use this point for sciatica pain. Hint: If your headache is one sided massage GB41 on the OPPOSITE foot for relief. This point is located on the outside top of the foot in between the 4th and 5th metatarsal bones, to the outside of the tendon. Reach your toes to your nose and look for the tendon to pop out on the side of your foot just above your pinky toe.

Nutrition:

When trying to conceive, pay extra attention to eating a healthy and balanced diet. Limit sugar, processed meat and dairy. Including foods that are nourishing to the kidneys is a good idea. These foods include kidney beans, black beans, barley, millet, tofu, fish, seaweed and eggs. It is also important to include blood-nourishing foods, particularly in the first half of your cycle, following the period and through ovulation. Lean red meat, dark leafy greens, dates, chicken, molasses, eggs, legumes, beets and mushrooms.



Give yourself a break

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, we talk about yin and yang. Yin is the cool, watery, passive, receptive energy of the body, while Yang is the hot, fiery, active, expansive energy.

Conceiving a child is the most yin thing our bodies can do. Unfortunately, infertility often necessitates a very yang approach to conception - actively tracking ovulation, going for blood work incessantly, constantly thinking about whether or not you are pregnant - these are all yang manifestations of who you are.

This contradiction is so hard for many women, but often a necessity. Be sure you take some time to nourish yin. That can sometimes, in and of itself, be the magic fix.

