



Sue Haynes

Fertility: some facts

Statistics

- Approximately one in six couples experience fertility problems.
- Although it is often assumed that the problem lies with the woman, this is only actually true in approximately 30% of cases. A further 30% of cases are due to male fertility issues, 30% to both partners and 10% are unexplained.
- Even a healthy couple will take, on average, between 12-18 months of 'trying' before they conceive. We live in a fast-paced world and tend to forget that nature's natural rhythm moves at a much slower pace.
- A woman is most fertile between 18 and 25. Fertility significantly declines after the age of 35. This means it's harder the older you get, but that doesn't mean it's impossible.

Lovemaking

- Sex needs to involve deep vaginal penetration in order to ensure the sperm are deposited near to or on the cervix.
- It is preferable for the male to ejaculate before the woman's orgasm. This is because the female orgasm causes the cervix to tilt and 'grab' the sperm.
- Fertilization can only happen if lovemaking occurs near to ovulation. The egg is released 14 days before the first day of the next expected period (if periods are regular) and survives for up to 24 hours.
- Sperm survive for 2-4 days inside a woman's body (at the right time of the month) and are most numerous if the male only makes love every 2nd day. So, sex every other day from day 11 to 16 (ish) of the cycle will maximise fertility.
- Don't use lubricants, including KY Jelly, olive oil and spit as they interfere with the sperm.

Fertility enhancing tips for men

Sperm counts are dropping by 2% per annum. Men thought to have fertility problems in the 1950s would be considered comparatively fertile nowadays.

Even if tests show a satisfactory sperm count/motility etc. it's still worth doing what you can to enhance your sperm production/quality.

- You will be less fertile if you are taking common antibiotics like penicillin and tetracycline. I'm not saying don't take them, just beware that they are likely to affect your fertility for a short while. X-rays can also dampen sperm production for months so also bear this in mind.
- Since the 1960s, the residue of oestrogen in the water supply has been rising due to increasing numbers of women taking the pill. Oestrogen in males devastates sperm production. This means you should drink/cook with either bottled mineral/spring water or consider fitting a reverse osmosis water filter. Common home filters such as Britta do not filter oestrogen from the water.
- Avoid soya, which also contains oestrogen. This sounds simple but you'd be surprised at how much packaged food, including some shop-bought bread, contains soya – so read all food labels carefully. Ideally you should cut out packaged/processed/fast food altogether and eat a well-balanced and healthy diet.
- To help sperm motility, drink lots of fresh fruit smoothies (3 per day would be good) – especially those containing blueberries. Ideally make them yourself but if you don't have time, buy the purest/freshest you can, eg. Innocent.
- Give up smoking. Nicotine destroys sperm so patches/gum won't do either. Marijuana can also affect sperm production.
- Cut down on alcohol and ideally, give it up.
- Wear loose fitting clothes on your lower half. Wear boxer shorts or, better still, go commando!
- Take time out to de-stress.
- Take regular exercise, but avoid tight shorts, hard racing bike saddles and vigorous and excessive exercise, as these can all reduce fertility.
- Consider taking the following supplements: Amino acids; Zinc; Ginko Biloba (if erections are a problem).
- If tests reveal issues with either the quality or quantity of your sperm, consider fortnightly reflexology treatments until satisfactory test results are achieved.

Fertility enhancing tips for women

- Know when you ovulate. There are 3 main methods: temperature method; cervical mucus method and DIY ovulation kits.
- Avoid alcohol if at all possible – including up to 3 months before trying to conceive.
- Don't smoke. Smokers take about 30% longer to conceive than non smokers, and have less successful IVF treatments.
- Avoid recreational drugs such as marijuana and cocaine. These can decrease sex hormone levels and make miscarriage, malformation and stillbirth more likely.
- Begin a healthy diet at least 4 months before trying to conceive if possible. This will prepare your body and correct any nutritional deficiencies. Eat plenty of fresh fruit and veg, unsaturated fats, oily fish, high fibre foods and complex carbs. Try to eat organic produce where possible. Eliminate trans fats, processed/packaged foods and refined sugars. Eliminate all drinks containing caffeine and/or sugar and all stimulants. Herbal teas, spring water and diluted pure fruit juices are better.
- As well as taking folic acid, zinc (30mg per day), selenium (100mg per day), essential fatty acids in the form of linseed oil (1000mg per day) and vitamin B complex should be added to the diet. Vitamins E, C, A and iron are useful too. It sounds a lot but a good quality multivitamin and mineral supplement designed for pregnancy will more or less cover all of these. Lamberts supply a product called 'StrongStart' that is particularly designed for pre-pregnant women.
- Regular moderate exercise has many health benefits – but don't exercise to excess.
- Too much stress can upset sex hormone levels and the normal menstrual cycle. Failure to conceive can in turn lead to tension and further stress. Try to identify and avoid any obvious sources of stress.
- Have a positive mental attitude. It's easier said than done but it really is important to believe, and indeed visualise, that you will get pregnant. Some people have said that they don't like to tempt fate or leave themselves open to disappointment, but if you can visualise something you want you can bring it closer to becoming a reality.
- Keep your feet warm.
- Control your weight. Being over or under weight can seriously handicap fertility.
- Don't underestimate the impact of your emotions on your ability to conceive. This is particularly important if you have miscarried. Allow yourself to grieve, and don't hold back on expressing your emotions.
- Consider weekly reflexology treatments (often just half an hour is necessary), to aid relaxation, improve your mood, help to relieve tension and improve your overall sense of wellbeing. If you are undergoing fertility treatment of any sort, consult your reflexologist about treatment suitability and frequency.

This document was written in good faith and based on my training; guidelines from my professional body; personal experience and research. Big thanks to David Wayte for the benefit of his knowledge and experience.

I am not a nutritionist or doctor. Professional advice should be sought accordingly.