

SUMMIT

# Naturopathic News

## Fertility Support

Parenthood is a journey, one that starts before conception occurs. The health of both partners prior to conception will impact the health of your children. Therefore, any work you do to improve your health and naturally enhance fertility will be a gift to your children. As we like to say in the naturopathic community: the first gift is your health, the second is conception.

Fertility challenges are a significant issue in our culture, and medical fertility clinics are big money makers. Approximately 40% of fertility issues are challenges with the female partner, 40% with the male and 20% are unknown problems. Parenting is a joint effort, as is the process of getting there.

Even if there are no challenges to fertility, it is optimal to set the tone for a healthy pregnancy prior to conception. New research shows that fetal and childhood health is influenced by the health of both parents, starting before the pregnancy occurs. From that perspective, it can be helpful to assess the health and fertility of both the future mother and father, ideally starting a year prior to desired conception. A comprehensive evaluation with a naturopathic provider can help identify and remove obstacles to conception, as well as help create an ideal health environment in which to conceive and raise a healthy child.

Effective preconception planning involves gathering a detailed health history for both the female and male partner, as well as a family history in order to help restore balance and optimize health and fertility. Our goal is to identify and remove any obstacles to conception, optimize menstrual patterns and hormone production, and preserve the vitality of the egg and sperm to facilitate fertility.

### Laboratory testing

Laboratory testing is an important tool for fertility and preconception planning. Naturopathic doctors can order and interpret standard blood tests, such as thyroid and other hormones, cholesterol, kidney and liver function, vitamin D3 and iron levels. Then, depending on individual health history and current health issues, we may recommend additional testing. Some of that testing may be "standard" blood testing that we can run through your insurance, and some may be "functional testing", which typically is not covered by insurance. Functional testing includes labs such as comprehensive food allergy and sensitivities, heavy metal toxicity, adrenal function and comprehensive digestive health analysis.

### Toxin avoidance

Environmental and food toxins have been shown to damage both eggs and sperm, and therefore decrease fertility. It is nearly impossible to avoid all toxicity in our modern world, but a naturopathic doctor can make suggestions for minimizing exposure. We may also recommend specific toxin testing or additional detoxification techniques, depending on individual risk factors.

### Nutrition

Nutritional recommendations will vary based on each individual's unique physiology and needs. However, in general a whole-foods, plant-based diet, free of artificial chemicals is advised. Some general suggestions include:

- Minimize coffee intake. Drink less than 250 mg of caffeine daily and ideally, limit coffee to 1-3 days/week.

- Ideally, avoid alcohol and marijuana.
- Focus on fruits & veggies, whole grains, raw nuts & seeds and beans.
- Dark leafy greens are a good source of folate and calcium.
- Shop organic and non-GMO when possible.
- Incorporate healthy fats such as avocado, raw nuts & seeds, whole eggs, organic poultry and small amounts of coconut oil.
- Avoid trans-fats (which negatively impact sperm quality) and minimize red meat. Wild game, such as elk or venison, is ideal.
- Organic soy appears to be beneficial for women.
- Avoid gluten, if possible.
- Choose low-glycemic index foods to balance blood sugar.
- Eat fermented foods to support the microbiome (studies show positive impact on fertility).
- Avoid processed sugar as it's pro-inflammatory and therefore may affect the quality of eggs and sperm.
- Be careful with extreme diets.

### Supplementation

At the Mountain-River Naturopathic Clinic we like to use minimal supplementation. Our goal is to address any underlying issues with nutrition and lifestyle choices, and then apply targeted therapies for each individual. That being said, there are some basic nutrients that are important for both the female and male partner. Additional supplementation may also be recommended if your health history and/or laboratory testing indicates it's appropriate.

- A good quality pre-natal multi-vitamin.

For both partners:

- Vitamin D3: usually around 5,000 iu for mountain residents.
- Omega 3 oils: 1,000 -2000 mg of combined EPA & DHA. In men, the omega 3's have been shown to improve sperm production, and in women, help regulate hormones and increase blood flow to the uterus. Be sure you are using a high-quality, tested form of fish oil, in order to avoid heavy metal toxicity.

### Self-care and stress management

Multiple studies have shown that stress, inadequate sleep and too much or too little exercise can have a negative impact on fertility. When stress becomes chronic, it can suppress ovulation and damage eggs, as well as your future children. It is important to identify areas of weakness, in terms of your own life-style, and then work to improve those factors. It will only help you be a better parent.

### Maya Abdominal Therapy and Acupuncture

Both of these physical medicine techniques have been shown to improve fertility, as well as decrease stress. Dr. Nearpass is certified in the Arvigo Technique of Maya Abdominal Therapy, and we would be happy to recommend an acupuncturist.