



# Nutrition for Fertility

A HEALTHY BODY IS A FERTILE BODY. . .

## NUTRITION

Optimum nutrition increases fertility, supports a healthy pregnancy, and improves the chances of giving birth to a thriving, healthy baby. Below are some recommendations on healthy eating for fertility as well as during pregnancy! The following ways of eating will help your body to function at its best, balance hormones, and create a healthy reproductive system. You will feel energized, while building a healthy foundation of nutrients for you and your baby.

## EAT A WHOLE FOODS DIET

**Unprocessed, unpreserved, organic.**

The quality of food you put into your body has a major impact on the functioning of your hormones, cellular activity and overall health. The processing most food undergoes depletes much of the natural nutrition present in the original fruits, grains, and vegetables. Living foods (fruits, veggies, nuts, seeds) are nutritionally superior to packaged foods.

*\* Eating whole foods can ensure that you are giving your body healthy nutrients, while avoiding chemical additives.*

## EAT ORGANIC, GRASS FED MEAT WITHOUT HORMONES

The journey to pregnancy is an intricate balance of hormones, so it is important to avoid anything that might create imbalance. Pesticides, chemicals and hormones used to treat produce and animal products contain synthetic estrogen-like substances, which can occupy estrogen receptor sites in the body and may have a negative effect on the organs and our endocrine system.

## CRUCIFEROUS VEGETABLES

Cruciferous vegetables contain I3C (indole-3-carbinol) and DIM (di-indolmethane), which are compounds that stimulate more effective use of estrogen. Excess estrogen may often be associated with the symptoms of PMS such as breast tenderness, moodiness, abnormal uterine growths and weight gain.

*\* Sources: Kale, Cabbage, Brussel Sprouts, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Bok Choy.*

## REDUCE YOUR INTAKE OF SUGARS & REFINED CARBOHYDRATES

Eating an excessive amount of sugar may lead to an imbalance in blood sugar levels, obesity and a higher potential for inflammation and disease. When your blood sugar is out of balance your cortisol and insulin levels also become imbalanced. Increased cortisol levels are linked with hormone dysregulation.

*\* Limit your intake of breads and pastas, all of which convert to sugar or glucose in your blood stream.*

*\* Alternative sweeteners: Stevia, Agave, Honey, Molasses or Brown Rice Syrup.*

## BONE BROTH

Eating nourishing stews and soups is a wonderful way to combine healthy vegetables and protein and is easy to digest. Using bone broths can supply calcium, minerals, protein and immune system boosters. You can make stocks/broths in a crock-pot using the bones from organic chickens or beef.

*\* Use bone broth as a base for soups, sautéing vegetables or cooking your grains.*

## ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS (EFAS)

EFAs are incredibly important to consume when trying to conceive, as well as during pregnancy. EFAs have an anti-inflammatory effect on the body and can act as hormone regulators. Omega-3 and Omega-6 are important structural components of cell membranes, body tissue, and brain development in the fetus. A new born baby's brain and central nervous system is composed of over 70% omega 3 EFAs (DHA). DHA in particular has been shown to greatly improve fetal brain development, which may ultimately affect the baby's IQ, hand eye coordination, motor skills, verbal ability and general comprehension.

*\* Sources: Fish, Non-Hydrogenated cold-pressed oils such as flaxseed, eggs, raw nuts and seeds, dark leafy greens and cruciferous vegetables.*

*\* Start taking EFA's with a higher concentration of DHA at least 3 months before you try to get pregnant. I recommend that women consume 300-600mg of DHA daily prior to conception, during pregnancy and breastfeeding.*

## SLOW DOWN

Putting intention into the preparation and eating of meals reduces stress and allows you to take time and enjoy the process of cooking and remember that you are nurturing and healing your body. Traditional Chinese diet advocates chopping vegetables and meat to allow for the release of more energy when they are eaten, and lightly cooking of steaming vegetables rather than eating them raw to make them more easily digestible, and micronutrient available.

*\* Limit your microwave usage! Microwaving food affects its molecular structure and, according to Chinese medicine, decreases the Qi energy available in the food. Make sure to eat your food in a calm environment and try to refrain from eating in your car, on the run or while working.*

# OPTIMAL GUIDELINES FOR ENHANCING FERTILITY

## SEE AN INTEGRATIVE FERTILITY SPECIALIST

A physician or practitioner who specializes in Fertility can help guide your choices, and educate you on the importance of preconception healthcare. Acupuncture greatly increases your chances of fertility and IVF rates of success.

## REDUCE STRESS

Stress can delay ovulation by switching on your sympathetic or "fight or flight" nervous system. The increase in sympathetic response shunts blood flow to the extremities and thus can reduce the amount of blood flow to the ovaries, uterus and intestines.

## AVOID ALCOHOL

Just two drinks per week has the potential to elevate prolactin levels and thus inhibit ovulation. A 1998 study in Fertility and Sterility showed a 50% reduction in conception rates in women who drank compared to the abstainers. Research has also shown that drinking alcohol causes a decrease in sperm count, an increase in abnormal sperm and a lower proportion of motile sperm. Alcohol also inhibits the body's absorption of nutrients such as zinc, which is one of the most important minerals for male fertility.

## ELIMINATE CAFFEINE

Caffeine increases the sympathetic tone of your nervous system, thus increasing cortisol levels and ultimately causing hormone dysregulation.

## **AVOID XENOESTROGENS**

Xenoestrogens are environmental estrogens, coming from pesticides and the plastic industry. When you are trying to conceive, one of the most important things you need to do is to balance your hormones. It is extremely important to avoid anything that might cause an imbalance, and one of the main culprits is the xenoestrogens.

*\* One of the best ways to eliminate an excess intake of xenoestrogens is to buy organic produce, and avoid drinking or consuming products contained in plastics.*

## **EXERCISE**

Balance and moderation is key. Too much vigorous exercise is associated with poor ovulation and lower sperm counts. While too little exercise can lead to elevated estrogen levels which prevents ovulation and inhibits the corpus luteum's functions. Finding the right balance is important with exercise, as you definitely want to be healthy and fit before pregnancy.

*\*Moderate exercise increase blood flow, and decreases stress: two very important factors in increasing your fertility.*

## **STOP SMOKING!!**

### **Newborn Beauty**

Even second hand smoke can have a negative impact on both male and female conception rates. Smoking has been linked to increased risk of miscarriage and impaired fertility rates. In men, smoking can decrease sperm count, decrease motility, and it can increase the number of abnormal sperm.

## **THE EFFECTS OF HEAT ON SPERM COUNT**

A 2004 study in the Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health showed that a rise in scrotal temperature of just 1 degree (C) can reduce sperm counts by 40%. Men who worked with their laptop computers balanced on their lap for one hour had an average scrotal temperature increase of 2.7 degrees (C).

*\*Causes of increased scrotal heat: tight underwear, hot tub exposure, bicycling, seat heaters in cars, lap top usage (resting laptop on lap).*