



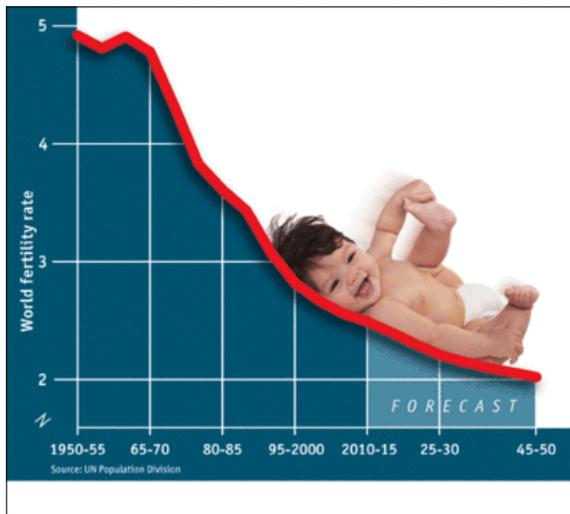
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Boosting Fertility Naturally

The 5 Major Causes of Low Fertility, and The Solutions for Them

Currently in Australia, **one in six couples are classed as infertile, and fertility problems strike one in three women over 35**. It is estimated that in 40 per cent of cases the problem rests with the male, in 40 per cent with the female, ten per cent with both partners, and in a further ten per cent of cases, the cause is considered unknown.



Something seems very wrong here—shouldn't pregnancy and reproduction be a very simple and natural processes? In the past, we have had to spend a lot of effort **preventing** pregnancy occurring, and now it seems the opposite is the case. What has changed; what has gone wrong?

Male fertility is relatively easy to measure. Numerous studies have found that, on average, **male sperm counts around the world have more than halved in the past 50 years and are still falling** at a rate of two per cent every year.¹ (A Finnish research team found a drop in the

percentage of men with normal, healthy sperm production from 56.4% in 1981 to 26.9% in 1991, a decrease of more than 50% in 10 years! This change was accompanied by a decrease in the average weight of the men's testes as well.² Research by the University of Turku suggests **environmental reasons, particularly exposure to industrial chemicals**, may be behind both trends.³ Currently, healthy young men between 18 and 25 have only 5 to 15% normal quality sperm. In animals, the rate is 90%!) All this research only relates to male fertility, however if it is due to environmental factors, it is

¹ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-158463/Why-male-fertility-decline.html>

² <http://www.ourstolenfuture.org/newscience/reproduction/sperm/humansperm.htm#>

³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-12634109>

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very likely that these factors would also affect female fertility, which is harder to measure.

What is causing all this?

The 5 big changes in the last 50 years that have impacted on fertility are

1. Decreased levels of nutrients in our foods
2. Increased levels of chemical toxicity in our bodies
3. Increased exposure to endocrine disrupters
4. Increased hormonal contraceptive use
5. Women leaving having children until a later age

1. Decreased Nutrients in Foods

In the wild, the fertility of animals depends on how much good quality food they eat. Research by the CSIRO showed that nutritional levels in our foods are now about half of what they were 43 years ago. So even if our diet is perfect, we might still not be getting enough of the right nutrients we need for optimum fertility. Some research indicates that those that eat organic foods, which are normally much higher in nutrients, have much higher fertility rates. Producing a baby places a huge demand on a woman's body, and many women just don't have enough reserves of the minerals and other nutrients that the body needs for both the mother and a baby. So having the ideal level of the right nutrients will make sure that you have the best chance of falling pregnant and having a healthy pregnancy for the full term. A pregnancy multivitamin is NOT adequate!

2. Chemical Toxins

Our bodies are exposed to hundreds of toxins every day. There are pesticides and preservatives in our food, fluoride in toothpaste, chlorine and other types of chemicals in drinking water, aluminium in deodorants, mercury in eyeliners and mascaras. Other types of makeup contain petrochemicals, etc. Also, when cockroaches and ants are sprayed there is a huge toxic exposure, there's formaldehyde in carpets, scotch guard on furniture to stop stains, and there was an interesting report on 60 Minutes a while ago where they revealed how the fire retardants that stop clothing and upholstery from catching fire, contain deadly poisons. Some of the clothes we wear contain poisons because they've gone to the drycleaners, and medications also leave a chemical residue in the body. So we are regularly polluting our bodies without realising it.

The level of chemicals we are exposed to is quite surprising- there are 3,000 chemicals intentionally added to food supplies, and over 700 in drinking water. 70,000 chemicals are used in the US, and 65,000 of them have been classified hazardous or potentially hazardous. And over 6,000 new chemicals are developed each week! In an analysis of the breath of average people living in the suburbs, researchers detected chloroform, trichlorethane, benzene, styrene, xylene, carbon tetrachloride, dichlorobezene, ethyl benzene, trichloroethylene, and other compounds. It doesn't take a chemist to know that these do not belong in the body.

Our systems were never designed to deal with these chemicals. Over time, the level of these toxins builds up in the body, and many of them can impact on fertility. As covered

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earlier, male fertility has been clearly linked to exposure to chemicals, especially lead⁴ and pesticides⁵. In fact, fertility experts are advising all men trying to conceive to switch to organic food or thoroughly scrub fruits and vegetables to reduce their exposure to pesticides⁶. And studies have shown that when you combine 4 or more 'safe' chemicals they have huge adverse effects⁷.

3. Endocrine Disruptors

There are chemicals which are used in the manufacture of cosmetics, plastics, food cans and furniture which act in a similar way to oestrogen. These chemicals can build up in the body, and high levels are often found in human urine. According to research, these 'Gender-bending' chemicals, known as endocrine disruptors, could be responsible for making four out of ten men infertile⁸. One type of these chemicals, phthalates, has been found to harm the liver, kidneys, lungs and reproductive systems as well. Two phthalates are already banned in Europe from being used in chewable plastic toddlers' toys because of the risk to male fertility.

However the impact on female fertility is just as great. Putting chemicals into a woman's body which imitate oestrogen but don't work the same way, can easily throw out the delicate hormonal balance needed for proper ovulation, fertilisation, implantation of a fertilised egg, and pregnancy.

For more information on Endocrine Disruptors, please see www.cntc.com.au/fertility/endocrine-disruptors/.

4. Hormonal Imbalances

There are a number of ways that taking the Pill can affect your fertility.

- One of the most essential factors in successful conception is fertile cervical mucus. After semen is ejaculated, the sperm travel up to the cervical crypts, and here they are fed and nourished by the cervical mucus before they start their journey up into the uterus. The Pill degenerates these crypts and decreases the cervical mucus. The good news for most women is that these crypts grow back with time, however it is important to realise that it often takes a number of months for a women's fertility to return to normal levels after stopping the Pill.
- The Pill over-rides the body's own hormonal control systems. When you stop taking the Pill, your body has to adjust back to regulating your hormones itself. For some women this will happen quickly and easily, however for others it may take some time for the correct hormonal cycles to re-establish. A 'time to pregnancy' study in 2004⁹ found that **women coming off the pill took 2-3 times longer to conceive** than those who were not previously taking it. It is best to allow at least 6 months of

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⁶ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-158463/Why-male-fertility-decline.html>

⁷ <http://www.sciencemediacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Sharpe12-EMBO-Reports.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-158463/Why-male-fertility-decline.html>

⁹ M. Hassan and S. Killick, 'Is previous use of hormonal contraception associated with a detrimental effect on subsequent fertility?', Human Reproduction, 19 (2): 344-51, 2004.

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natural fertility treatment after taking the pill to optimise your body for conception, and to ensure that your body has everything it needs to be able to pass on to the baby. This will help maximise the health of your baby and also reduce the risk of a miscarriage.

- In acupuncture, it is believed that the Pill worsens the circulation to the ovaries and the uterus, so that there is less nutrition getting to these organs. Improving the blood flow to the reproductive organs is believed to be one of the primary reasons why acupuncture is so effective at improving fertility¹⁰.
- A medical study in 2005 found that when partners who smell differently to each other have children, their babies have a wider range of immunity that if their parents smelt the same or similar. They discovered that women in their most fertile phase of their cycle are most sensitive to smell (especially that of male sweat), just as pregnant women have increased sensitivity to food and odours. So fertile women are more attracted to males that will help produce children with a better immune system. However, the study also found that, because the Pill reverses the usual smell-immune system signals, women who have been on the pill will choose to reproduce with a male that has a similar immune system, and **will have increased difficulty falling pregnant**. And when they do fall pregnant, the child may be born with a lessened immune system.¹¹
- The Pill changes how your body metabolises nutrients, and so your nutritional balance is compromised when taking and when withdrawing from the Pill. This can be a concern during pregnancy, as there are many essential nutrients which are necessary for healthily foetal development. One example is folic acid levels, which are considerably reduced in Pill takers. Women who conceive within 6 months of coming off the Pill will usually have less red blood cells and plasma folate levels, which can lead to recurrent miscarriage.

Zinc is also of equal importance and is stripped by taking the Pill. Catching up of the adequate dose of zinc is very important, as zinc is necessary for both your body and your baby's body to produce new cells. Low zinc can also result in stretch marks, a less elastic perineum, cracked nipples and prolonged labour. Importantly, zinc keeps your copper levels in check, as high copper levels are believed to be a contributing factor to post natal depression. Babies who are born registering zinc deficiency are said to cry more and are difficult to console- not a great mix for a mother suffering post natal depression! Zinc is also responsible for the development of a healthy immune system, brain, skeletal muscle and bones. So, if possible, it is best to improve your zinc status well before you conceive. As well as zinc, selenium and many other vitamins and minerals are needed to rebalance hormones, helping to improve fertility, and to have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

5. Age

It is well-known that women are tending to have babies later in life, and that age is a factor with fertility. The best way to offset this is to improve the other factors as much as

¹⁰ Human Reproduction 11:1314-1317

¹¹ J.N. Lundstrom et al., 'Effects of reproductive state on olfactory sensitivity suggest odour specificity', Biological Psychology, 2005.

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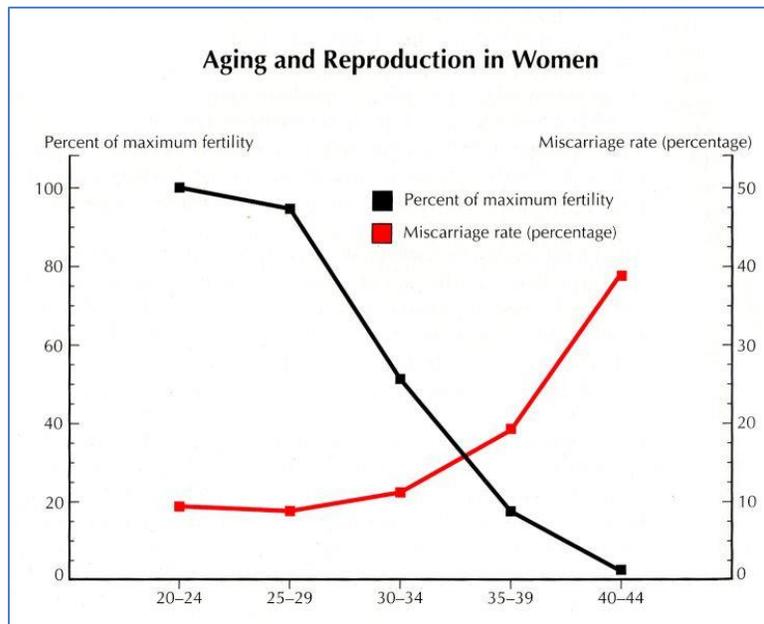
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possible (including the removal of any chemical build-up in the body and to optimise nutrition levels), as well as to maximise the general health of both partners.



Boosting Fertility Naturally

There are a number of other factors involved in fertility that need to be considered as well.

Timing- Sometimes hormonal imbalances produce obvious symptoms, such as bloating, irritability, breast tenderness, cravings or depression. However, there can be significant imbalances that don't produce any obvious symptoms, yet throw the timing of ovulation out. When an egg is released from the ovaries, it is only viable for 8 to 12 hours, so timing is critical when you are trying to fall pregnant. If you are ovulating too early or too late, you could be trying to conceive for years without success, so establishing when you are ovulating is very valuable.

Temperature- Sperm works best at 36.2°, which is why the testicles are on the outside of the body. **In very simple terms**, a woman's temperature prior to ovulation should be around 36.2°, and after ovulation it should go up to 36.8°. 36.2° is the best temperature for fertilisation of the egg, and 36.8° is the best temperature for implantation of the fertilised egg and for maintaining pregnancy. Maintaining a Basal Body Temperature chart is an excellent way for us to check how well your hormonal cycle is working, roughly when and how well you are ovulating, and if your thyroid may be affecting your fertility.

Detox- We have seen how important it is to clear out any chemicals in the body that may be interfering with your hormonal balance and reproductive health.

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Nutrition- Unfortunately, the nutrition levels in our food have decreased significantly over the last 40 years. When the body contains high levels of good quality nutrients, it naturally becomes more fertile, and a healthier pregnancy, healthier baby, and a better recovery from the birth, are all much more likely.

Circulation- However, having great levels of nutrients doesn't help if the blood isn't getting to the right areas. **Period pain**, lower back pain with your period, clots with your period, or a lower abdomen slightly cooler to the touch, usually indicate poor circulation to the uterus and lower abdomen.

Stress- Research has shown that the fertility rates for animals drop sharply when they are placed under stress. Excess stress puts the body into 'fight or flight' mode- if a tiger jumps out at you behind a tree, your heart rate goes up, your breathing rate goes up, certain muscles tighten, your blood sugar levels raise, and **non-emergency systems in the body are shut down**. This includes your digestion, immune system, and reproductive system. We don't get too many tigers roaming in Brisbane, however what is extremely common is to see people with a build-up of accumulated stress in their body over time. This keeps their body in survival mode, instead of in 'rest, repair and reproduce' mode.

Treatments

A woman's periods give a valuable insight into how well her hormones and reproductive system is working. So one of the aims of any course of fertility treatments is to improve the timing and length of the woman's period, make sure the flow is not too heavy or too light, and to resolve any period symptoms. Improved periods are a sign of improved fertility.

Both acupuncture and naturopathy can be used to address all of the above fertility factors, to get a women's periods working more correctly, and to improve male sperm counts and sperm morphology (sperm shape, which indicates sperm health).

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is becoming recognised as one of the best methods of improving fertility available. A major study published in the British Medical Journal has shown that needle acupuncture given within a day of embryo transfer in women undergoing IVF **improves their pregnancy rates by a massive 65%**, ongoing pregnancy by 85%, and live birth by 91%. Other studies have reported similar results¹².

However, IVF with a single acupuncture treatment included has a lower success rate than a full course of acupuncture treatments. On its own, acupuncture to improve fertility usually has a success rate of over 50%.

Research has also shown that for women with a history of recurrent miscarriage, acupuncture treatments resulted in live birth rates of 86%, compared to 33% for women that did not receive treatments¹³.

¹² Fertility and Sterility 74(4):721-72, and American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) October 2004

¹³ Aust NZ J Obstet Gynecol 1991:31:4:3210

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Naturopathy

Naturopathy has been used for thousands of years to improve fertility. According to recent studies from the Foresight Foundation in the UK, a comprehensive course of treatment (modelled on the Foresight programme) has over a 75 per cent live-birth success rate without the help of IVF. Naturopathic medicine looks after the chemistry of the body, including nutrition levels and toxin levels. It stabilises hormone health, and works well at regulating periods, cycle length and ovulation times. Naturopathy can help ease endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome, as well as improving sperm morphology (sperm shape), motility count, and egg quality.

While acupuncture and naturopathy can each significantly improve a couple's fertility, the improvement is even greater when both are used in a co-ordinated way, which is what we specialise in at our clinic.

Special Offer

If you are trying to conceive, or are looking to start trying in the next 12 months, or are going through IVF, we recommend having your nutrient levels, thyroid function, hormone balance, stress levels, internal circulation, and toxicity levels checked at our clinic. A Comprehensive Health Assessment, performed by our Head Therapist, is normally \$120, but is currently available free of charge. During your Assessment, we will identify and explain to you

- What exactly is happening with your fertility
- Why you might be having difficulty conceiving, and
- What are the best approaches would be best to get your fertility back to where it should be

Please note that it is much better if you and your partner each have an Assessment, and if possible sit in on each other's appointment. There is no obligation with an Assessment, only information and understanding. Places for these Assessments are limited, so if you would like to reserve an appointment for you and your partner, please ring or email soon. Please also feel free to contact the clinic if you would like any additional information about any aspect of fertility, and we look forward to meeting you soon.



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