

## Practical Preventable Medicine



### FERTILITY AND CHINESE MEDICINE

Nothing seems to get much more controversial than the topic of fertility. It is of increasing concern that over the last 40 years our fertility rate has fallen from 3.5 children per couple to 1.73...that's half! (Family Matters No 3:2002 Aust. Institute Family Studies).

These all focus not on the ability of having a baby, but the rates at which we have babies as a population. The fertility that interests a Chinese Medicine Doctor is the ability to conceive when that decision has been made. In 2007 it was estimated that 7% of couples at reproductive age are infertile, however due to many social factors, couples are choosing to have children later and later with markedly increasing infertility rates.

Why then does it become more difficult to have children as you get older? The reason is your gametes. Unlike men whose sperm is constantly being produced (which by-the-way is the reason that the quality, quantity and motility is effected by the foods you eat and the chemicals that you take, be it natural or artificial), a women's eggs are produced while in utero and need to last her whole life through. When we age the integrity of the DNA becomes more unstable and this increases risks of abnormalities and therefore less successful pregnancies.

After the age of 35 it is said your kidney Qi declines and that your general health and quality of lifestyle directly affect that rate. We Chinese Medicine doctors concentrate on reinforcing this Kidney Qi and use various herbs to balance out the sex hormones when aiding fertility. At a seminar on Fertility, Dr Jane Littleton informed us of many cases of women who were approaching early menopause had this processed reversed with Chinese herbs.

The heart has a major role to play in ovulation in Chinese medicine and the heart as we all know is affected by stress. Someone with a high-pressure job or life situation for many years may find their cycle irregular and in this case, herbs can calm the mind and regulate ovulation. And of course there is blood. This is the stuff of life and needs to be healthy so any problems with the uterine lining such as endometriosis, cold and heat also effects fertility.

What is important to both sexes is balance in rest and work and good quality food. Also be cautious about hormonal contraception and remember only a condom protects from STD's and effects no-one's delicate hormonal balance!

Until next time

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Stay well

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