

A “fertile” food plan

Chinese Medicine is about balance and awareness. I suggest that you take the following tips as recommendations to increase awareness in the way you relate to food more than rigid restrictions to achieve a goal. Above all, have fun with healthy choices!

Why is food important?

The state of our inner Universe is greatly influenced not only by the food choices that we make but also by the state of body and mind that we find ourselves to be the moment that we put food in our mouth. We can have the most organic, kosher chicken and still get a stomachache from it if, for example, we are multi tasking as we are eating. It is also true that poor food choices will catch up on our health. Yes that seducing ice-cream becomes a bomb once it settles in your stomach! Maintaining a proper diet is key when trying to conceive!

A Fertile food plan approach

Eat **three meals** a day: ...and please, don't forget that one of these meals is breakfast!

Eat Organic, natural foods. I suggest you consume as much organic and pesticide-free foods as possible, since they are rich in vitamins and minerals, which are key to conception and fetal development.

Eat green leafy vegetables, fruits, beans and peas. These foods are all high in folic acid a well known vitamin that among other things will help in the quality of the egg thus increasing your chances of pregnancy. Oranges and lemons are also rich in folic acid.

Get enough Omega-3 fats. Eating enough omega-3's may help prevent prematurity and low birth weights. The main source of omega-3s are fatty fish (especially wild salmon), eggs, nuts, seeds, sea vegetables, and green leafy vegetables like spinach, broccoli, cabbage, collards, and kale. Unprocessed vegetable oils (most notably flaxseed, macadamia nut, and hempseed oils) are also good sources.

There has been an increasing concern about mercury found in fish which has proven to be quite toxic to the fetus and stays in a woman's bloodstream for over a year. Fish that's high in mercury includes white tuna, shark, frozen swordfish and marlin. Fish that contain low levels of mercury include salmon, flounder, trout, haddock, tilapia, and canned chunk light tuna (not albacore). Experts say that it is safe for women to have up to 12 ounces of low mercury fish per week.

Always follow your local government advisory. If in doubt, take good quality fish oil supplements instead. I like Metagenics and Designs for Health.

Eat lean meats and eggs. They are valuable sources of protein, vitamins and minerals; a significant contribution to a healthy reproductive system.

Favor cooked foods over raw foods. These foods are easier to digest to digest, assimilate and absorb which may mean better fertility.

Drink pure, filtered water. Good hydration is essential for your body to thrive! Dr Northrupⁱ recommends one ounce of water per every two pounds of weight. For example, if you weigh 140 pounds, drink 70 oz of water per day. (1 cup contains around 8 oz of water). I recommend that you get a water double filter. “Aquasana” filters have very good reviews. Make sure to avoid plastic water bottles since they tend to leach plastic into the water, a dangerous xenoestrogen which has the potential to create hormonal imbalances. You can get a stainless steel water bottle.

Supplements. High-quality multivitamins are an excellent way to ensure that a diet contains enough nutrients. Vitamins containing zinc, folic acid and B vitamins are crucial. *Zinc* helps cell division in the development of the fetus, while a lack of zinc can decrease the production of healthy eggs prior to conception. Zinc is the only mineral conclusively shown to increase fertility rates. *Vitamin B6* is rich in folic acid, while Vitamin B12 helps to absorb it. Again, I like supplements coming from Metagenics or Designs for health. It is very important to take high quality supplements.

Get enough natural light. Light is a nutrient that affects fertility. Make sure to enjoy the morning or evening hours or use full-spectrum light bulbs that recreate all the frequencies of natural light.

Sleep in the dark, without a night light. According to Dr Northrupⁱⁱ, Nighttime darkness enhances normal levels of melatonin and increases fertility.

Supplement after your menstrual period. Especially if you have heavy periods. The week after you started your period you may want to consider eating “bloody” foods –Beef bone soup, bone marrow soup and hearty stews. Boil the bone for 10 min before adding it to your soup; this will cut the grease quite a bit! I also recommend that you supplement with Floradix (an iron rich formula that you can buy at any health food store) for a week after you finish bleeding.

An Unhealthy food plan approach- What could make you sick?

Avoid preservatives and other chemicals, such as artificial sweeteners, should be avoided because they affect blood sugar levels and hormonal balance. Foods high in fat should also not be consumed.

Avoid Sodas. This includes Diet soda which contains aspartame.

Avoid Caffeine: It constricts blood vessels, which reduces blood flow to the uterus and prevents eggs from attaching to the uterine wall Even one cup of coffee per day has been shown to double the rate of miscarriage. You may want to enjoy green tea instead which is quite rich in antioxidants! Limit your intake of green tea to 2 cups a day

Refined carbs, such as white bread, pasta and rice, should be limited. These foods lack nutrients, such as iron and B vitamins, which are important for providing a rich nutrient base to a potential fetus. Rye and whole-wheat sourdough breads are good options. Always choose whole grains over refined ones.

Avoid eating a lot of meat. Meat raises the body's ammonia levels, which inhibits the implantation of the egg in the uterus.

Avoid drinking alcohol. research has shown that alcohol can decrease sperm count, impair sperm motility and cause malformation of sperm.

Avoid smoking tobacco, and that includes 2nd hand smoking. Smoking is by far is the most common contributor to prematurity and low birth weight.

Avoid smoking marijuana and other recreational drugs. Marijuana affects sperm quality and will affect the brain and developing system of the child. Also, drinking more than two alcoholic beverages per week can increase levels of prolactin, the hormone that regulates milk production and reduces the chance of conception while nursing.

Minimize consumption of sweets. I would rather eliminate them altogether. They create havoc in our bodies; they specially interfere with insulin levels which in turn will create imbalances in our hormonal environment making it harder to conceive. If craving sweets, you may want to follow Dr Daoshing Ni'sⁱⁱⁱ recommendation to eat dark chocolate with higher cacao content (50% or more).

Avoid chemical additives such as aspartame and MSG.

Avoid partially hydrogenated fats: which occur mainly in packaged foods.

Meal preparation ideas and inspirational reading

“The Dao of Fertility” by Dr Maoshing Ni for food preparation ideas and for general inspiration.

“Mother-Daughter Wisdom” by Christiane Nothrup. A fantastic resource with patients’ testimonials and great good tips.

May this be a joyful journey!

With you
Dr Yamin

References:

“The Dao of Fertility” by Dr Maoshing Ni

“Mother-Daughter Wisdom” by Dr Christiane Nothrup

“The green Pharmacy” by James A. Duke, Ph.D.

ⁱ “Mother-Daughter wisdom” page 55

ⁱⁱ “Mother-Daughter wisdom” page 52

ⁱⁱⁱ The Tao of Fertility, page 100.