

Infertility - Frequent Asked Question About Acupuncture & Herbal Medicine

What types of infertility can acupuncture and herbal medicine treat best?

Acupuncture and herbal medicine best treat infertility due to hormonal imbalances. For example, many of patients want to undergo and **IVF** procedure but will be turned down as their **FSH** levels are too high. With the proper use of acupuncture and herbal medicine, **FSH** levels may be normalized. There are patients whose uterine lining fails to thicken properly; acupuncture and herbal medicine may be quite effective in helping the lining to increase in thickness. Many patients complaints of infertility are often labeled “idiopathic” which means “no known cause”. In other words, there is no explanation as to why this individual is no conceiving; she is perfectly healthy and presents with no pathology. She is a perfect candidate for acupuncture and herbal medicine. Acupuncture and herbs cannot unblock tubes, or destroy cysts or shrink fibroids though there have been reported cases of shrinking smaller fibroids. Acupuncture and herbal medicine cannot repair or correct anatomically malpositioned uteri.

How does acupuncture help treat infertility?

Acupuncture and herbal medicine work in two entirely different ways. One does the job that the other cannot. Acupuncture invigorates or enhances the circulation of blood and energy throughout the body. This seemingly benign result of acupuncture treatment is extremely important for those individuals who are having difficulty conceiving. Some

manifestations of obstructed flow of energy and blood are: endometriosis, blocked tubes, fibroids, clotting in the menstruate, premenstrual lower abdominal aching or sharp and stabbing pain over the ovaries during ovulation, menstruation or ovulation related headache, breast aching, extreme emotional lability and cold hands and feet. While the above signs and symptoms in and of themselves will not necessarily render one fertile, they do reveal internal blockage of energy and blood which may contribute to infertility.

What do the herbs do?

Acupuncture moves things but cannot “give” anything to your body. If you have what is called in Chinese medicine “deficiency of blood” causing infertility, acupuncture in and of itself will probably not help you. Several signs and symptoms of “blood deficiency” include but are not limited to dizziness, hair loss, floaters (seeing spots), weak or brittle finger nails, insomnia, and a light, and scanty period. In addition to “deficiency of blood”, there are many other types of systemic deficiencies which can be successfully treated with herbal medicine. Herbal medicine can have a direct impact on your metabolic system, your endocrine system and other systems, which may be hypofunctioning and contributing to infertility. Herbal medicine can nourish your internal reproductive landscape and give your body something it lacks; acupuncture can invigorate that which is stagnant and move that which is blocked.

How important are dietary changes for me?

Proper nutrition is very important from the perspective of reproductive health. Correct dietary and exercise habits are just as important for the preconceptive mother as for the father. Eating salads (cold nature food) for a year is not the best diet for a person who has generally a low basal body temperature (BBT). Sometimes eating meat such as lamb (warming food) can help tonify a “cold” barren uterus.

My doctor says that if my FSH levels are elevated even once, this indicates that I have poor egg quality. What is your opinion on this?

Having poor egg quality is not ideal for conception but remember, there are thousands of women with poor egg quality who conceive daily after the appropriate medical intervention which should include acupuncture and herbal medicine. Acupuncture and herbs will serve to get your reproductive system in tiptop condition!

How long should I get treated for?

You will typically be treated with acupuncture one time per week, and, the day before ovulation and, two or three days post ovulation. This means that there will be one week per month that you will be treated two or three times in the same week.

The rationale for this is that acupuncture increases the blood flow to the uterine lining, tubes and ovaries as a result of stimulating beta-endorphin release, which inhibits the sympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system, when over stimulated (by stress, for example) causes renal and uterine artery constriction thus preventing the reproductive

organs from getting the most patent blood flow.

The most important time to highly stimulate blood flow to your reproductive organs is right before ovulation so as to allow the endometrium to be highly receptive to a fertilized egg. As a result of this added blood flow to the ovaries, your egg quality may also be enhanced.

Treating you two to three days after ovulation will serve to reduce uterine contractility thus increasing the chances of a successful implantation. Though we typically consider three months of treatment to be appropriate when treating patients with fertility issues, this may vary.

When you do conceive, I may continue to treat you until the end of the first trimester at the frequency of one time per week to help insure against miscarriage. In addition to acupuncture, most patients will benefit from taking herbal medicine as well.