

The role of acupuncture in fertility



Acupuncture is a traditional medicine form that has been around for over 3000 years, originating in China and is used in to treat various health problems such as back and joint pains, relieve stress and regulate the flow of chi or energy in the body of the person that avails it. Acupuncture makes use of very thin needles inserted in different pressure points throughout your body to achieve energy flow regulation and promote health and well-being. Apart from this, the use of acupuncture has also been used to help people having problems in fertility. It can be used to help you conceive if you are having problems doing so.

Over the years, more and more treatments aiming to address fertility and conception problems and help individuals and couples get pregnant. Some of these treatments have worked in one way or the other, while some have been proven to be ineffective and are eventually no longer used or prescribed. Among these treatment methods, traditional Chinese medicine procedures such as acupuncture and others are still used in the Western world and is gaining popularity for its benefits not only for helping couple in terms of fertility and conception but also for their general health status.

What is Fertility? Conception?

Fertility is the word that is used to denote your capacity to get pregnant (if you are a female) or impregnate (for males). It is usually connected to your capacity to perform the roles and responsibilities associated either with motherhood or fatherhood. However, the word conception is used to point out to a state when that capacity to get pregnant is taken advantage of, resulting to the creation of a fetus and therefore pregnancy. These are all

part of the natural order of things and are considered to be both responsibilities and privileges as well.

The Problem of Fertility and Conception

One of the most exciting phases in the life of an individual is when he or she is able to procreate and bring forth a child in to the world. If you are a woman, getting pregnant usually is correlated to your sense of completeness and ability to perform your biological role of motherhood. Likewise, if you are a man, being a father confirms your virility and your ability to procreate and start a family. Therefore, conception is not only a burden and role placed upon the woman, but also upon the man as well because they have shared responsibilities in the process of conception. However, this is usually clouded when either of you are faced with problems with fertility and conception, resulting to decreased ability to get pregnant and bring forth a child. The usual problem of fertility and conception also puts a strain into a relationship, with partners focusing and stressing over the need to conceive.

When you are stressed, it usually causes a disruption in the flow of your chi (or energy), and can bring about changes in how your body functions. This change in bodily function can affect levels of specific hormones that are responsible for fertility (as with ovulation in females and sperm counts and motility in males), and eventually in conception. Also, stress can also take its toll on the body by altering blood and oxygen flow to vital parts of the body that plays a role in fertility, conception and pregnancy. Moreover, lifestyle and dietary patterns have also been shown and proven to play a significant role in your fertility by altering nutritional and oxygen level and delivery to

other cells of your body. By having patterns that are less than ideal, your fertility, and subsequently, capacity to get pregnant may also be affected.

Fertility and Acupuncture

As previously mentioned, problems with fertility or more commonly called infertility, is due to a number of causes. In females, one of the most common factors associated with fertility is the presence of spasms in the uterus and fallopian tubes and miscarriages. Acupuncture in fertility is usually used to address these problems. Also, since fertility is related to hormonal levels, acupuncture can also be used to treat problems with hormones (specifically the thyroid hormone) which are also pointed out to be root causes of infertility. This can be seen when hormones responsible for the general sense of health and well-being are being affected, creating what you call as a “feel-good” state. Likewise, acupuncture is also used as a form of treatment for people with infertility from usually unknown causes. These all help place acupuncture in the mainstream, allowing it to be used side-by-side with more medically-traditional treatments.

For women, acupuncture has been seen to improve hormonal levels that are highly important for fertility such as the luteinizing and follicle-stimulating hormones. This can contribute greatly to higher chances of pregnancy, as was supported by research studies. In males, acupuncture has been seen to increase the fertility of males as it contributes to the increased number and volume of sperm cells with normal characteristics and reducing the number of defective ones. Moreover, this can also help improve sperm motility, causing it to reach its destination faster than other sperm cells.

Benefits of Acupuncture in Fertility

Because of its ability to realign and create a sense of normalcy in your energy flow or chi, acupuncture can bring about a lot of benefits for you as you go on your way to improving your fertility and become pregnant. As it balances those aspects of your mind and body that creates a problem in your state of fertility and ability to conceive, acupuncture combined with proper diet and a good physical environment can help you attain pregnancy. Moreover, the following aspects are also improved, contributing to increased fertility.

1. *Acupuncture helps you reduce stress levels.* Because of the burden you face in becoming pregnant, psychological form of stress is not uncommon. This can create a less than favorable impact on fertility since the presence of stress can lead your body to release hormones that may interrupt normal mechanisms that are related to proper ovulation and menstrual cycle. Acupuncture helps in this area by increasing the release of the hormone beta endorphin, allowing you to feel more relaxed and calm and decreasing your stress and anxiety levels. Also, because of this, the blood flowing to the uterus is improved, and oxygen and nutrient supply to the ovaries are maximized. When this happens, your menstrual cycles are regularized, ovulation cycles are normalized and fertility is improved.

2. *Acupuncture increases the strength of your immune system.* Sometimes, problems with fertility is caused by a problem with the immune system, making it less favorable for fertility to thrive and pregnancy to occur. Acupuncture treatments can help you treat the root cause of immune system

problems and ensuring that your body is at its best possible condition necessary for fertility and conception.

3. Acupuncture can help in regulating your hormones related to fertility. As mentioned in the previous section, when you are stressed, the body decreases its release of an endorphin that is necessary in controlling pain sensation and affecting the ovulatory processes essential for fertility and conception. Hormones such as the gonadotropin releasing hormone, follicle stimulating hormone and the luteinizing hormone are regulated, contributing to fertility.

4. The quality of your egg cells are improved after acupuncture treatments. Because of its ability to normalize bodily functions, and in effect the function of your endocrine glands, acupuncture can help improve the quality of your egg cells, resulting to better chances of successful conception and pregnancy. Also, it has been shown that through regular treatments with acupuncture, women who are experiencing anovulatory cycles can achieve normalized menstrual cycles and that hormonal disturbances are also resolved.

5. Side effects of medications may be reduced through acupuncture treatments. One of the most common medications prescribed to older women who want to become pregnant is Clomid. However, one of this drug's effect is the thinning of your uterine lining, decreasing your chances to successful pregnancy. Acupuncture serves a reversing agent for this by causing your uterine lining to thicken and allowing it to maintain a uniform appearance and functioning. Because of this, blood flow to the arteries in the

uterus is improved, allowing more oxygen and nutrients to be distributed to the uterus and its linings which are conducive to promoting fertility and pregnancy.

6. *Acupuncture may be used concomitantly with in-vitro fertilization (IVF) for better success rates.* Because of its capacity to increase and improve blood flow to the uterus, acupuncture is often used as a concomitant therapy to IVF. This is because acupuncture is seen to cause a thickening in the uterine lining that is rich in oxygen and nutrients, and also by causing this lining to be more uniform in structure. Blood flow to the ovaries are also increased, ensuring better quality of the egg cells.

7. *Uterine contractions are decreased.* During implantation, there is a tendency for your uterus to contract, which may cause you to lose the pregnancy. Acupuncture treatments, when given regularly, may help in reducing these contractions during implantation, allowing the embryo to grow and become a fetus that can carry on to term.

8. *Acupuncture also helps fertility in males too.* This is because with acupuncture, sperm appearance, count and motility is increased.

The above-mentioned benefits of acupuncture in fertility may be achieved through regular treatments and observance of modalities that are set in place to ensure that you can best take advantage of the role of acupuncture in pregnancy.