

Fertility Diet

Those who take medicine and neglect their diet waste the skill of the physician
~ Chinese proverb

Traditional Chinese medicine focuses on bringing the body into balance. When in balance a woman's body is naturally fertile and able to nourish both her own body and her fetus. TCM seeks to remove obstacles to the natural balanced state through acupuncture, herbs, diet and lifestyle. The fertility diet recommendations below blend traditional Chinese medical knowledge with groundbreaking modern research to teach women what and how to eat to optimize fertility.

1. Consume a Whole Foods Diet

Whole foods are minimally processed and provide maximum nutrients, fiber, enzymes, antioxidants and taste without added artificial flavours, colours, preservatives, sweeteners or trans fats.

2. Focus on Slow Carbs

Slow carbohydrates are slowly digested causing a slower and more gradual rise in blood sugar after being eaten. They include beans, peas, lentils, whole grains (such as brown rice, barley, millet and quinoa) and vegetables. Slow carbs minimize insulin resistance, regulate blood sugar, improve fertility and prevent gestational diabetes. Eliminate all white carbs – white flour, white pasta, white rice, white potatoes and white bread.

3. Eat Primarily Plant Based Foods

Plant based foods include a rainbow of high fiber, high antioxidant fruits and vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds and whole grains. A plant based diet means that most (but not necessarily all) of the diet is based on plant foods. This diet is eaten around the world and is associated with health promotion, disease prevention and longevity.

4. High Antioxidant Foods

A diet high in plant based foods will be naturally high in antioxidant foods. Fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices decrease oxidative stress and cellular inflammation associated with decreased fertility. Select primarily organic produce – shown in multiple studies to be higher in antioxidants (and free of hormone-disrupting pesticides!)

5. Consume Healthy Fats and Avoid Trans Fats

Healthy fats combat inflammation and improve hormone sensitivity. Healthy fats and oils include coconut oil, nuts, seeds, avocados, olives, raw (uncooked) olive oil, and fats found in wild cold-water fish. Trans fat (also known as hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fat) – typically found in commercially prepared baked goods, fried foods, and processed snack can disrupt with normal ovulation by interfering with a cell receptor that controls inflammation, glucose metabolism, and insulin sensitivity.

6. Eat Only High Quality Dairy Products

Small amounts of full-fat dairy products daily, such as live culture yoghurt, kefir, and high quality organic goat and cow cheeses have been shown to enhance fertility.

7. Eat Mindfully

Slow down and tune into the nutritive properties of food. Allow mealtime to be a time when you focus on nourishing your mind, body and spirit. Mindfulness has been shown to help decrease stress, lower blood sugar and blood pressure, decrease anxiety and depression and enhance well-being.

8. Eat For Balance

In TCM all health concerns are based on an imbalance in the body. This may be an excess or a deficiency of one of the vital substances or a blockage of energy flow in the body. Your Naturopathic Doctor can help you determine your imbalance and give you recommendations for foods to promote balance (e.g. foods to boost yin or clear heat).

9. Take Supplements Appropriately

Supplements can be used to enhance a healthy diet but should not be used as a replacement for a healthy, balanced diet. A prenatal multivitamin with iron, calcium, antioxidant nutrients (A, C, E, selenium and zinc), probiotics, fish oils and others may be used to enhance fertility and support a healthy pregnancy for both mother and child.

Select resources: Chavarro J, Willett W. The Fertility Diet. Harvard Health Publications. 2008. Lewis R. The Infertility Cure. 2004.