



5 Foods to Enhance Your Fertility

By: Erin Gifford



Wendy Johnson* and her husband wanted to have a baby, as many other couples do at any given time. So they tried and tried to conceive, even undergoing one intrauterine insemination (IUI) and two costly cycles of in vitro fertilization. Still, there was no pregnancy and no baby.

So Wendy took another approach. She sought out nutritional counseling and modified her dietary intake through foods and supplements. Two months later, she was elated to find herself staring at a positive home pregnancy test.

How Food Impacts Fertility

There's been extensive research to date indicating that certain foods can have a positive impact on a woman's fertility. In fact, according to Beth Heller, director and co-founder of Pulling Down the Moon, a holistic treatment center for infertility in Chicago, nutrition is one of the easiest ways to maximize fertility. "Certain foods can regulate the hormones that affect egg production," she says.

A well-balanced, nutrient-rich diet can help regulate a woman's menstrual cycle and produce good quality cervical mucus, both of which are essential for conception. Foods that are high in vitamins B and C, zinc and fatty acids are among the best in helping a woman to become pregnant, and are more effectively absorbed and utilized by the body than supplements.

What to Eat for Enhanced Fertility

Heller suggests that women add the following five nutrient-rich foods to their diet to enhance their fertility:

Yams, which are rich in folate, as well as vitamins C and B6. These vegetables contain diosgenin, a substance similar to progesterone, which can help stimulate ovaries to release one or more eggs each month.

Nuts and seeds, including almonds, walnuts and pumpkin seeds, are a great source of fatty acids. Omega 3 and omega fatty acids are hormone regulators and vital to a woman's fertility since a hormonal imbalance can interfere with ovulation.

Cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower, contain Vitamin A as well as a substance called di-indolylmethane, which regulates the metabolism of estrogen that is essential for keeping fertility hormones in check.

Oysters, which have the highest zinc content of any food. Zinc helps maintain a healthy menstrual cycle. Zinc deficiency has been linked to decreased fertility since it can slow the production of good quality eggs essential for conception.

Berries, such as blueberries and raspberries, are exceptionally high in antioxidants, which can prevent cell damage and aging, as well as help protect eggs and sperm. For women who delay having a child, protecting egg cells from the aging process is vital for enhancing the chances of conception.

Diet and Fertility: Final Thoughts

When trying to get pregnant, it can feel as if you're living your life under a microscope, admits Heller, a former fertility patient. Many women constantly feel as though the stress of trying to get pregnant, and everything they eat and drink will negatively impact their fertility.

"You can't be perfect 100 percent of time. If you can eat right 80 percent of the time, you're doing well. If you really want ice cream, it's okay," says Heller.

* Name changed on request.