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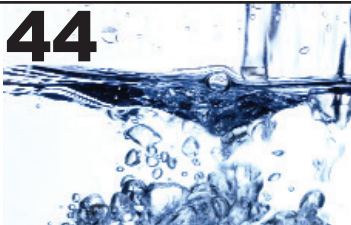
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Support Fertility

The Natural Way with Ayurveda

One of the greatest wonders and gifts in life is the process of reproduction and the birth of a child. Difficulties in conceiving are becoming a growing concern, with many couples feeling anxious and distressed.

The medical definition of infertility is the inability to conceive after a year of regular sexual union without the use of contraceptives or the inability to retain the fetus to full-term.

The first step in addressing infertility is to make the correct diagnosis of the cause by assessing both male and female partners. In a small number of cases, infertility is diagnosed as 'incurable'; however, in the majority of cases there is cause for hope as the condition is usually reversible.

According to Ayurveda, conception will take place when the sperm, ovum and uterus are all healthy. The shukra dhatu represents the reproductive tissues in both men and women and is produced as a result of a seven-step sequential transformation process of bodily tissues. A blockage or lack of nourishment at any stage of this process can hinder conception. Therefore, the health of the reproductive tissues is dependent on the health of the former tissue formation.

Reproductive tissues are formed after the plasma, blood, muscle, bone and bone marrow and fat have been formed. These bodily tissues are known as 'dhatus.' The health of tissues while they are being formed is dependent on the ability of the body to properly digest food; hence having a well-functioning digestive system is important. The first step in Ayurveda would be to go through a cleansing process known as 'panchakarma' or a mild palliative detox to remove the toxins and impurities from the body. Good digestion ensures that 'ama' (toxins) does not form further and that bodily tissues are subsequently nourished, influencing the health of the sperm and ovum. Once there is evidence that ama has been removed, a nourishing sattvic diet and lifestyle which supports fertility is encouraged.

Since dhatu formation is a complex process, there is, of course, a vast range of possible causes that need to be pinpointed so that appropriate measures can be taken to create a healthy internal environment, conducive to conception. Ayurveda focuses on clearing the

channels where there is an obstruction, blockage or accumulation of toxins that hinder nutrients from reaching the body tissues and therefore, indirectly, causing infertility.

Ayurvedic treatment approach

An Ayurvedic infertility treatment plan would usually be a two-stage process; first the cleansing of the body (and mind) and then rejuvenation therapy to create a supportive environment and good health of all seven tissues.

Treatment of infertility would be unique to the individual as the causative factors will vary from person to person. The doshic constitution (vata, pitta, kapha), environment, sex, age and temperament and the family history of both partners would also be considered. In general, the focus would be on stimulating the body's natural healing ability to encourage fertility, rather than the use of external drugs or surgery. This approach would simultaneously improve the overall wellbeing of the person without causing further side effects. Once a diagnosis has been made and the state of the constitution has been established, all the treatments and herbs can then be tailored to restore a natural balance.

The foundation of Ayurvedic infertility treatment would be to:

- ☺ identify and address the root cause;
- ☺ determine the doshic constitution of both partners; ☺ remove toxins and impurities and clear blockages; ☺ boost the digestive system and increase metabolism; ☺ manage mental and physical stress; ☺ maintain a supportive diet and lifestyle.

Ayurvedic purification

In order to encourage fertility, the body needs to be free from 'ama' (toxins) and impurities that create blockages and hinder the good health of the tissues. Pancha karma, the five Ayurvedic purification methods would be administered for this purpose. The process would start with pre-purification treatments of a series of herbal oil





Causes of infertility

- ☹️ Poor nutrition of reproductive tissues due to sluggish digestion, increase in toxins or under-nourishment.
- ☹️ Overindulgence in sexual activity can lead to depletion of reproductive tissue and impotency.
- ☹️ Suppression of sexual urges for long periods can lead to obstruction and decrease libido in the long term.
- ☹️ Eating excessive spicy, salty and hot foods that increase pitta dosha.
- ☹️ Physical and mental stress.
- ☹️ Compromised immunity.
- ☹️ Nervous system imbalances.
- ☹️ Disturbed natural biological rhythms of the body.

massages. This would be followed by herbal steam to loosen the impurities over the whole body in preparation for elimination. Intake of medicated ghee in incremental doses is given to soften and open the channels of the body, ready for elimination of ama. This pre-cleanse therapy ensures that the channels are clear so that the nourishment can reach the various tissues. These loosened toxins are then eliminated through emesis, purgation and enemas which are the main purification methods. Once the body has been properly cleansed of the toxins, the rejuvenation process (rasayana treatment) can begin by restoring a natural balance to the body functions. The first step is to create a strong digestion to prevent toxins from building up and to ensure that optimum nutrition is absorbed from the foods.

Ayurvedic rejuvenation

Rasayana therapy is designed to help nourish the body, bring doshas back into balance and restore normal bodily functions, particularly ovulation. A programme of dietary regulation, daily regimens, herbal medication, ayurvedic tonics, yoga and a stress free life is introduced.

Both partners would benefit from following a restorative whole food diet based on their constitutional needs and can include foods such as: ☹️ fruits such as pears, peaches, mango, plums, raisins, figs, dates, grapes, coconut and pomegranates ☹️ grains such as basmati rice and lentils such as mung and kidney beans ☹️ dairy proteins including milk, buttermilk, paneer, ghee ☹️ nuts including almonds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds ☹️ spices including cardamom, nutmeg, saffron, rose, jasmine, cinnamon, cumin, coriander, turmeric, fennel, ajwain ☹️ vegetables such as asparagus, sweet potato, broccoli, squash, carrot, and beetroot ☹️ alcohol, caffeine, smoking and poor quality fats in the diet should be avoided.

It is important that women take mental and physical rest during the monthly cycle and they should keep lean and active. In addition to the recommendations given above, the following should be added to the diet: spices such as turmeric and ajwain are good for keeping the uterine organs cleansed; ghee can be replaced with oil; the intake of carbohydrates and fats

should be reduced and proteins can be increased; small amounts of barley can be taken with milk.

It is recommended that the man should follow a sattvic diet complemented with increased milk, ghee, rice and nuts.

Herbs for infertility

Herbs and tonics that support fertility include shatavari (*asparagus racemosus*), ashwagandha (*withania somnifera*), ashoka (*saraca asoca*), aloe vera and triphala. These herbs, amongst others, are highly rejuvenating, promote the balance of hormones and encourage the production of reproductive fluids. There are also supportive herbal jams that are packed with nutrients and herbs; these include chyawanprash and brahmi avaleha, phala grtam.



Yoga and meditation for infertility

In today's society, stress is often a major factor in the widespread infertility rates. It is imperative that both partners take initiatives to relax the body and mind. This can be done through the practice of relaxing breathing techniques such as nadi shodhana and ujjaya pranayama and various meditations. Yoga postures such as padmasana (lotus pose) can increase the blood flow to the perineum and activate the lower chakras, muladhara (root) and svadisthana (sacral) that govern the sexual functions. Pelvic floor exercises can also enhance circulation to the reproductive organs.

Ayurveda advises that conception should be avoided if experiencing negative emotions, if suffering from compromised immunity, if menstruating or if one has overeaten. Intercourse should take place when the couple is in a happy mood, and the best position for conception is with the woman lying on her back. Afterwards, the woman should have a cool bath and cup of boiled milk with saffron. **CHW**

© As a member of the APA, Geeta Vara is a fully qualified Ayurvedic Practitioner working in London and the South East providing consultations, treatments and corporate workshops. For more information about supporting fertility treatment or other health concerns, please email: geetavara@gmail.com or call: 07956 521601. www.geetavara.co.uk

Reference: Charaka Samhita, Sutra Sthana, Ch. XXI, Department of Health website.