

FEMALE INFERTILITY STUDIES

Female infertility can be caused by a number of factors, including the following:

Damage to fallopian tubes. Damage to the fallopian tubes (which carry the eggs from the ovaries to the uterus) can prevent contact between the egg and sperm. Pelvic infections, endometriosis, and pelvic surgeries may lead to scar formation and fallopian tube damage.

Hormonal causes. Some women have problems with ovulation. Synchronized hormonal changes leading to the release of an egg from the ovary and the thickening of the endometrium (lining of the uterus) in preparation for the fertilized egg do not occur. These problems may be detected using basal body temperature charts, ovulation predictor kits, and blood tests to detect hormone levels. Many women lack adequate progesterone levels to maintain a pregnancy.

Cervical causes. A small group of women may have a cervical condition in which the sperm cannot pass through the cervical canal. Whether due to abnormal mucus production or a prior cervical surgical procedure, this problem may be treated with intrauterine inseminations.

Unexplained infertility. The cause of infertility in approximately 20% of couples will not be determined using the currently available methods of investigation

One of the most recent interests in acupuncture in the United States has been in the area of female infertility procedures. Infertility clinics employ incredibly high-tech procedures such as In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) and Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI) and yet many couples trying to get pregnant look for assistance from the ancient art of Chinese medicine. The complimentary use of these two vastly different techniques has caught the attention of practitioners and patients alike because of the increased success rate. In fact, randomized controlled studies are looking at the efficacy of acupuncture in the treatment of infertility.

Three separate studies performed in the last seven years have demonstrated the effectiveness of acupuncture in improving success rates of IVF. The first study showed an improvement from 23% to 31%, a second showed improvement from 28% to 42%, and a third demonstrated a similar improvement from 26% to 42.5%. When looking at the results of these 3 studies, it is important to note that while not a guarantee, acupuncture certainly has a significant positive effect on fertility and IVF (a 30-45% improvement). Our staff would be delighted to share details of the three studies cited with anyone who wishes to review them.

Although these studies on the effectiveness of acupuncture are done using IVF patients, acupuncture can help increase success in the more traditional approach of conceiving a baby. Studies depend on a standardized method and removing as many variables as possible. It is very difficult to perform clinical trials and/or studies for the more natural way to conceive (there are too many variables). Acupuncture is very effective at increasing the ability to conceive, even though it lacks the placebo controlled studies to support it.

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