

Nutritional Therapy for Women / Infertility

A balanced diet is essential for the body to function properly. Supplements help improve fertility. Lack of protein and calories from malnourishment is a cause of infertility, so adequate nutrition should be the basis for treatment of any illness, including infertility. Eat pumpkin seeds for zinc, which is important for the health of reproductive organs. Bee pollen and royal jelly are extremely nutrient-rich bee products that help stimulate fertility. Avoid coffee, tea and colas; caffeine promotes infertility.

Dietary and Lifestyle Recommendations

A nutritional therapist may recommend life style changes including diet:

- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and sugar.
- Giving up smoking and drugs.
- Increase the intake of whole foods rich in vitamins and minerals to ensure that the ovaries produce healthy eggs.
- Take the intake of essential fatty acids. The primary source is oily fish, fish liver oils, seeds, nuts, pulses, beans and unrefined vegetable oils. The essential fatty acids stimulate the production of sex hormones.
- Avoid foods with wheat protein, gluten.
- Supplements may include: vitamin E to help regulate the production of cervical mucus
- Zinc and vitamin A to correct any nutritional deficiencies which may in turn promote some hormonal imbalance.
- Vitamin A.
- Glandulars (extracts from animal adrenal glands) to adjust any hormonal imbalances.
- Pantothenic acid to help relieve stress.
- Identify and control food allergies.
- Get regular exercise.
- Perform a relaxation exercise (deep breathing, meditation, prayer, visualization, etcetera) 10 to 15 minutes each day.
- Drink at least 48 ounces of water daily.

Nutritionists say that slight vitamin and mineral deficiencies, and exposure to chemical toxins, interfere with sperm and egg production and can encourage miscarriage.

A practitioner may recommend alkaline foods, such as bean sprouts, peas, and milk, to offset acidity in the cervical mucus, which can inhibit sperm. Avoid acidic foods, such as red meat and tea. Foods rich in vitamin E, like vegetable oils, nuts, and eggs, protect fatty tissues (thought to be important for fertility). Foods containing essential fatty acids, such as seeds, legumes, and oily fish, are also good. Supplements such as evening primrose oil, starflower oil, linseed oil, borage seed oil, and blackcurrant oil are also valuable. Folic acid and vitamin B supplements may be suggested, since deficiencies can lead to anemia that is associated with infertility. Some practitioners also claim that supplements of vitamin B6 may raise levels of progesterone in women with irregular or absent periods.

Here is a summary of the action of the most important vitamins/minerals/amino acids that play a role in conception. More detailed information on these vitamins can be obtained by visiting [holisticonline.com nutrition infocenter](http://holisticonline.com/nutrition/infocenter).

Vitamin E Diet

Vitamin E is the fertility vitamin. Vitamin E helps to normalize hormone production by rejuvenating the endocrine system. It is also essential in cellular respiration and the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins. Choose a product containing mixed tocopherols and begin by taking 200 international units daily, then gradually increase the dosage until you are taking 400 international units twice daily.

Natural sources of vitamin E include green, leafy vegetables, and watercress. Drink one tablespoon of watercress juice daily or add a few fresh sprigs to a salad. Wheat germ is an excellent source of vitamin E. In certain cases miscarriage can be prevented if the pregnant woman eats wheat germ on a regular basis.

Foods rich in vitamin E, such as liver, sunflower oil, and pumpkin seeds, may counter infertility.

Note: If you have high blood pressure, limit your intake of supplemental vitamin E to a total of 400 international units daily. If you are taking an anticoagulant (blood thinner), consult your physician before taking supplemental vitamin E.

Vitamin B

The B vitamins are required for a healthy nervous system and help maintain muscle tone in the intestinal tract. Take a good B-complex supplement that supplies 25 to 50 milligrams of each of the major B vitamins daily.

Vitamin B6 given for six months or more can make a marked difference in some women having problems conceiving, as this vitamin helps balance progesterone levels. The other B vitamins are best taken together to prevent imbalances from occurring.

Supplemental Digestive Enzymes

Taking supplemental digestive enzymes ensures full utilization of all nutrients. Take a full-spectrum digestive-enzyme supplement providing 5,000 international units of lipase, 2,500 international units of amylase, and 300 international units of protease, plus 500 to 1,000 milligrams of pancreatin, immediately before each meal.

Note: Long-term supplementation with pancreatin is not advised, as it can cause your pancreas to reduce its own production of this important enzyme. Overuse also has the potential to cause nausea or diarrhea. After two months on pancreatin, discontinue use and monitor your reaction. If you find that your digestive problems recur, discuss pancreatin supplementation with your health-care provider.

Essential Fatty Acids

Essential fatty acids, found in black currant seed oil, borage oil, evening primrose oil, and flaxseed oil, are required for normal glandular activity. This supplement is especially important for women who are highly athletic and/or very strict about eating a low-fat diet. Take 500 to 1,000 milligrams of any of these oils two or three times daily.

Folic Acid

Folic acid is necessary for successful conception and pregnancy. Moreover, low levels of folic acid early in pregnancy have been linked with an increased risk in so-called neural tube defects, such as spina bifida, in the developing fetus. A woman who wishes to become pregnant should take 400 milligrams of supplemental folic acid twice a day.

Royal Jelly

Royal jelly is rich in hormonal factors that help optimize hormone balance in both sexes. Many believe it enhances sexual performance. Take 20 milligrams of royal jelly daily.

Selenium

Selenium is an antioxidant that prevents free-radical damage, works synergistically with vitamin E, and preserves tissue elasticity. Take 200 micrograms of selenium daily.

Vitamin/Mineral Supplement for Absence of Ovulation

- High-potency multiple vitamins/minerals
- Vitamin C, 500 to 1,000 milligrams three times daily
- Vitamin E, 400 to 800 International Units daily
- Flaxseed oil, 1 tablespoon daily

Nutrition Recommendations for General Infertility		
Supplement	Suggested Dosage	Comments
Selenium	200-400 mcg daily	Deficiency has been linked to infertility in women.
Vitamin C	2,000-6,000 daily, in divided doses.	See Description
Vitamin E	Start with 200 IU daily and increase gradually to 400-1,000 IU daily.	Needed for balanced hormone production. Has been known as the 'sex vitamin' that carries oxygen to the sex organs.
Zinc	80 mg daily. Do not exceed a total of 100 mg daily from all supplements.	Important for the functioning of the reproductive organs. Use zinc gluconate lozenges for best absorption.

For women, an overgrowth of unfriendly or pathogenic bacteria, candida, fungi or parasites may lead to bloating, gas, alternating diarrhea with constipation, and bad breath. Most gynecological infections with resulting infertility stem from microbes that have crept into the vagina or uterus from the anus. Stool cultures for these potential problems may help make the diagnosis. Treatment will be aimed at balancing the large bowel flora with supplements like Lactobacillus acidophilus.