

## Can acupuncture be used to treat infertility?

Acupuncture, frequently combined with herbal medicine, has been used for centuries to treat some causes of infertility. For example, acupuncture and herbs will not work to address tubal adhesions which can occur as a result of pelvic inflammatory disease or endometriosis.

However, in this situation, an individual could still benefit from acupuncture and herbs because of the potential effect of improved ovarian and follicular function. Additionally, it is shown that acupuncture can increase blood flow to the endometrium, helping to facilitate a thick, rich lining.

## When should acupuncture treatment begin?

Acupuncture is similar to physical therapy in that it is a process oriented method of medical intervention. It is better to do more than less. Patients are commonly treated for three to four months before an insemination, in vitro fertilization (IVF), or donor-egg transfer. This period of treatment seems to have a therapeutic effect.

In a study by Stener-Victorin et al from the Departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology Fertility Centre, Scandinavia and University of Gothenburg, women are encouraged to receive acupuncture treatments pre and post embryo transfer. Clinical observations from the Berkley Center for Reproductive Wellness suggest that the most effective fertility treatments involve a combination of acupuncture, herbal medicine, and traditional medical interventions. However, conception does sometimes occur when acupuncture and herbal medicines are used without traditional medical interventions.

## When should I stop getting acupuncture?

Typically most miscarriages occur within the first three months of pregnancy. Therefore, treatment of patients may often last through week twelve to help prevent miscarriage.

## Are the acupuncture points different after an insemination, IVF, or donor-egg transfer than before?

Your acupuncturist should not place needles in the abdomino-pelvic area after insemination or transfer. There are 6 contraindicated acupuncture points which should be avoided when the patient is pregnant or pregnancy is suspected. These include Gallbladder 21, Stomach 12, Large Intestine 4, Spleen 6, Bladder 60, Bladder 67 and any points on the lower abdomen.

## What are the risks of using acupuncture?

There are minimal risks when using acupuncture for fertility treatment. A risk of miscarriage may develop if incorrect acupuncture points are used when a woman is pregnant. This is one reason why those wishing to include acupuncture in their treatment regimen should only be treated by an acupuncturist who specializes in treating fertility disorders. Acupuncture is not contraindicated for anyone regardless of their pathology or what medications they are taking.

## What types of fertility patients typically get acupuncture?

Acupuncture can be used to treat any type of fertility disorder including spasmed tubes. (Spasmed tubes are often de-spasmed with acupuncture, though blocked tubes will not respond to acupuncture). Acupuncture is often combined with herbs to treat elevated follicle stimulating hormone (FSH), repeated pregnancy loss, unexplained (idiopathic) infertility, luteal phase defect, hyperprolactinemia (when not caused by a prolactinoma), polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) with anovulatory cycles, and male factor including men affected with sperm-DNA-fragmentation.

## Is acupuncture a licensed profession?

In most states acupuncture is a licensed profession. You can visit [www.nccaom.org](http://www.nccaom.org) to find a licensed and Board certified acupuncturist in your area. It is important to recognize that being licensed and Board certified does not imply expertise in reproductive disorders.