

Infertility

Causes and therapies

Karen Jensen, ND



Perhaps the most difficult aspect about infertility is that it goes against one of our oldest, most deeply held assumptions about life—one day we'll be parents. It is estimated that about 20 percent of Canadian couples experience some form of infertility, which is defined as the inability to conceive within one year of unprotected sexual intercourse.

Common causes

Forty percent of infertility in women and men is from "unknown causes." These unknown factors appear to include what we eat, drink, and smoke. In one study, marijuana use at moderate levels was found to temporarily stop ovulation in monkeys. Another study found that infertility was 55-percent higher for women drinking one cup of coffee per day and 100-percent higher for women daily drinking one and one-half to three cups. Monosodium glutamate was found to decrease fertility by 50 percent in male test animals. Ingestion of alcohol in intoxicating doses up to 24 hours before mating has been shown to reduce chances of conception by 50 percent.

Sperm abnormalities can occur from overheating of the testicles in hot tubs, saunas, or with prolonged bicycling. Anti-sperm antibodies have been reported in approximately 10 percent of infertile men, and the percentage jumps

dramatically in men who have had vasectomy reversals, testicular biopsy, testicular cancer, or infection (prostatitis).

Female infertility may be due to fallopian tube blockages (36 percent) or ovulation problems (33 percent). Other

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common causes include fibroids, polyps, scarring that affects the uterine lining, or endometriosis.

When the infertility is due to causes such as fallopian tube damage, in vitro fertilization (IVF) is an option. IVF has a success rate of 45 to 50 percent in women under 35 years, 28 to 35 percent in women 35 to 41, and three percent in women 42 and older.


Natural remedies

In many cases, lifestyle changes and natural treatments should be the first choice—before fertility drugs. Eat whole foods—little or no junk food—exercise, and take a good multivitamin to ensure sufficient nutrients for reproductive health. In addition, the following vitamins and herbs have been shown to help promote fertility:

- Zinc supplementation of 30 to 60 mg per day can help to improve sperm counts. A good source of zinc is pumpkin seeds; try adding one-quarter cup of raw sunflower seeds daily to your diet.
- Vitamin E, in doses of 400 to 800 IU per day, is crucial to healthy reproductive function in both men and women.
- Chaste Tree Berry (*Vitex Agnus-castus*) in doses of 30 to 40 mg per day, standardized to six percent agnosides, normalizes the release of luteinizing hormones from the pituitary and promotes ovulation.
- False Unicorn Root Powder (*Chamaelirium luteum*), tincture six to 12 ml per day, helps with female infertility and helps prevent miscarriage.
- Siberian Ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*), 800 to 1200 mg per day, improves fertility by enhancing health and vitality and regulating reproductive hormones.
- Maca (*Lepidium meyenii*), 2,000 mg per day, is traditionally used in the Andes to improve energy and fertility.
- *Tribulus Terrestris*, 1,000 to 1,500 mg per day. Studies show that Tribulus increases fertility in women and increases number and mobility of sperm in men.

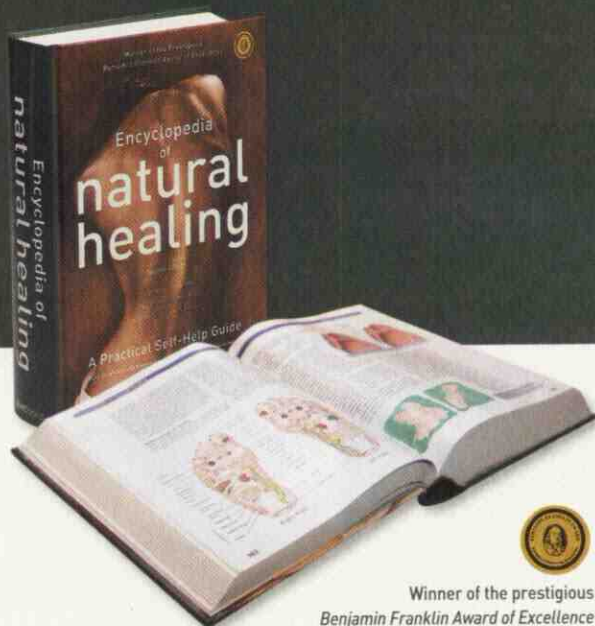


American ginseng root

There are both many causes and treatment options for infertility. It is never anyone's fault. You are a team and, by supporting each other, you will find a plan that is right for you. 

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