

# FAQs on Acupuncture and In-Vitro Fertilization

*How is acupuncture effective for treating infertility?*

Ancient Chinese physicians recognized the deleterious effects of chronic emotional stress on the human body. They observed that stress impairs function of the internal organs, disrupts hormonal and enzymatic balance, and depletes your body of nutrient substances it needs for normal maintenance and repair.

Acupuncture therapy is especially effective in calming the sympathetic nervous system in order to deactivate the stress response. Acupuncture also increases local blood circulation, boosts the immune system and normalizes endocrine function, including the sex hormones like estrogen, progesterone.

Clinical studies have shown that acupuncture can help improve reproductive function for both women and men. In fact, it is often recommended that couples enter an acupuncture program together.

Studies in Germany and China reported that when acupuncture was included with IVF therapies, the rate of pregnancy increased from 26% to 42%. Acupuncture can help normalize ovarian function to develop better quality eggs, and increase blood flow to the uterus to promote follicular development and embryo implantation. Acupuncture strengthens immune function, reduces stress and helps relax the uterus to prevent miscarriage after a successful implantation.

Several studies on male sub-fertility indicate that acupuncture therapy can improve sperm concentration and motility, as well as the ratio of normal to abnormally shaped sperm. In one study, after a course of acupuncture therapy to improve sperm quality, fertilization rates increased from 40.2% to 66.2%.

*How long will we need acupuncture treatments?*

For women, it is normally recommended to begin acupuncture therapy approximately three months before you plan to undergo IVF. Acupuncture and Chinese herbal therapy can help treat gynecological disorders that may affect reproductive capacity such as irregular menstruation, lack of menstruation, uterine fibroids and endometriosis.

At the start of your menstrual cycle before IVF, acupuncture helps to stimulate the ovaries to produce follicles and thicken the uterine lining. Immediately before and after implantation, acupuncture helps to

reduce stress and relax the uterus to prevent cramping and contractions that might result in miscarriage.

For men, acupuncture therapy to improve sperm quality usually requires a treatment course of 5 to 8 weeks.



*I don't like needles! Will acupuncture hurt?*

Many people imagine that acupuncture will be painful because of their previous experiences with immunizations. Hypodermic needles used for immunizations and blood draws have a hollow center and are many times thicker than an acupuncture needle, which is as thin as a strand of hair. In fact, several acupuncture needles can actually be inserted into the hollow tube of a hypodermic needle. People often do not feel anything at all, or else only a momentary prick when an acupuncture needle is inserted. In addition, we use only single-use, pre-sterilized needles, so there is virtually no risk of infection.

*We are interested in improving our chances for a successful pregnancy. How do we begin?*

In order to design an acupuncture treatment plan for you, it is first important to accurately diagnose the nature of your infertility complaint according to the principles of Chinese medicine. For your first visit, please bring your menstrual calendar, list of medications you are currently taking, and any diagnostic results that measure your reproductive function such as FSH and estradiol levels or sperm count.

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