

How acupuncture can boost fertility

We speak to a fertility expert about turning to acupuncture to rebalance your energy flow and prime your body for fertility.

By [Rhalou Allerhand](#) 22/01/2019



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If you've been trying to get [pregnant](#) without success, it can be an incredibly frustrating and stressful time. But once you've ruled out any major health-related obstacles, acupuncture is one of the most popular alternative therapies to help boost fertility.

We speak to women's health expert and registered acupuncturist [Emma Cannon](#) about turning to acupuncture to rebalance your energy flow and prime your body for fertility:

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is based on a system of Traditional Chinese Medicine that dates back 3,000 years. 'Acupuncture is one of the longest established forms of healthcare in the world,' says Cannon. 'Acupuncturists are trained to use subtle diagnostic techniques that have been developed and refined for thousands of years.'

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'The focus is on you as an individual, not your illness, and all symptoms are seen in relation to each other,' adds Cannon.

'Treatment involves the insertion of very fine needles into specific points on the body to affect the flow of your body's qi, or vital energy.'

Can acupuncture help with fertility?

Acupuncture is believed to boost fertility by regulating hormone function, increasing blood flow to the ovaries and uterus and helping to relax your muscles in order to improve the chance of an embryo implanting, not to mention lowering your stress levels, which can play a major role in fertility.

Acupuncture may be a suitable treatment option to help reduce stress and anxiety levels for women.

'Acupuncture improves blood flow to the ovaries and endometrium (womb lining). It also stimulates the hypothalamus which controls hormones, calms the mind and reduces stress, and improves LH (luteinising hormone) levels associated with ovulation,' explains Cannon.

'Acupuncture may also be a suitable treatment option to help reduce stress and anxiety levels for women suffering with subfertility,' she adds.

How does acupuncture work?

The acupuncturist uses fine needles around your body to correct imbalance in energy.

'By inserting very fine needles into the body to balance and stimulate the bodies Qi (energy) on carefully chosen acupuncture points on the body,' explains Cannon.

'Treatment is designed to affect your whole being as well as your symptoms so, as the condition being treated improves, you may notice other health problems resolve and an increased feeling of wellbeing.'

Is there any research to back this up?

There is evidence that acupuncture can be beneficial for fertility. 'A 2018 systematic review and meta-analysis carried out by [acupuncture.org.uk](https://www.acupuncture.org.uk) found acupuncture to have a significant treatment effect in improving the birth rates of subfertile women undergoing IVF or ICSI (Intracytoplasmic sperm injection),' says Cannon.

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'A summary of previous reviews from 2009 to 2017 found acupuncture had a beneficial treatment effect on clinical pregnancy rate,' she adds. 'It is recommended that future research should explore the impact of acupuncture administration during ovarian stimulation. The aim should be to improve embryo and blastocyst quality, rather than focus on acupuncture post-fertilisation.'

'Research indicates that the effectiveness of acupuncture may be dose-dependent, ie a sufficient number of acupuncture treatments are required over an adequate period of time,' continues Cannon.

'The scientific methods applied so far have been largely inadequate and the evidence inconclusive. Nevertheless, currently, research supports the findings that acupuncture at varied time points for an [IVF](#) or ICSI cycle, with increased frequency during ovarian stimulation as well as around the time of transfer, can have a statistically positive treatment effect on clinical pregnancy and live birth rate.'

Is it recognised by the medical community?

Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine is recognised by the medical community to be effective.

'Personally, I have worked with the medical community for 20 years and there is an acceptance amongst the [IVF](#) medical community that acupuncture is the go-to treatment to support IVF and other ART (Assisted reproductive treatment) as there is good evidence that it increases the chances of IVF being successful,' says Cannon.

What happens during a consultation?

Here's what to expect on the day:

- Your first consultation usually takes an hour - or longer, so make sure you give yourself enough time.
 - A thorough case history is usually taken during your first session.
 - Your acupuncturist will usually discuss your full medical history, including details of your menstrual cycle.
 - Tongue and pulse diagnosis will also be carried out.
 - Your treatment plan will then be discussed and agreed.
 - Acupuncture is often given in the first session.
 - You may feel a tingling sensation or a slight ache when the needles are inserted but it shouldn't be painful. Let your acupuncturist know if you feel uncomfortable.
 - You may feel drowsy or fatigued following your session, so aim to go home and relax afterwards if possible.
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Any other tips for natural conception?

Cannon recommends the following to increase your chances of conception:

- ✓ **Understand the menstrual cycle:** I recommend using [MyLotus](#) with acupuncture as it charts and stores a record of LH increasing the chances of conception by educating the patient to their fertile window.
- ✓ **Follow a good diet:** eat healthy food.
- ✓ **Reduce stress:** stress and anxiety can play a major role in subfertility issues.
- ✓ **Clean up your environment:** reduce your toxic load starting with using natural household products and beauty products.
- ✓ **Lots of sex:** make sex a priority, don't wait for the fertile window you can increase sex at this time but preferably be having regular sex throughout the month. This may improve sperm health.

 To find an acupuncturist near you visit emmacannon.co.uk or contact the British Acupuncture Council on acupuncture.org.uk