

Acupuncture offers a natural approach to treating infertility by encouraging a balanced menstrual cycle, optimizing a person's general health, and by reducing the physical effects of stress. Traditional Chinese Medicine is a holistic medicine in which the whole body and mind are considered during treatment. We feel that it is important to resolve any digestive or sleep issues, make sure your diet and exercise plans are on the right track and that you have better control of stress so that relaxation is possible. Using specific acupuncture techniques, we can target infertility issues and improve blood flow to the reproductive organs.

It is best to start acupuncture as early as possible so that you have time for any changes to take root before starting a medicated cycle. Acupuncture treatments are usually given weekly but a specific plan is designed for each individual. The acupuncture itself is a relatively painless experience and the needles are very thin, flexible, and disposable. First-timers usually have a hard time believing it is painless, but do not be afraid! We are very gentle and interested primarily in your comfort and relaxation during treatments.

The body of research on acupuncture's benefits during infertility treatment has expanded greatly over the past decade. We now have a meta-analysis and 2 Cochrane Reviews to help interpret all the data. While still pointing to the need to do more research, they report favorable results for acupuncture in conjunction with infertility treatments.

Effects of acupuncture on rates of pregnancy and live birth among women undergoing in vitro fertilization: systematic review and meta-analysis. Manheimer E et al, BMJ 2008;336 pg545-549

The British Medical Journal published a meta analysis of 7 of the acupuncture and IVF trials, choosing only those studies which met their strict criteria. The authors concluded, "The odds ratio of 1.65 suggests that acupuncture increased the odds of clinical pregnancy by 65% compared with the control groups... In absolute terms 10 patients would need to be treated with acupuncture to bring about one additional clinical pregnancy. These are clinically relevant benefits." The accompanying editorial in the BMJ comments that adding acupuncture to IVF improved pregnancy rates more than any other recent improvement or advance in IVF technology.

Acupuncture and assisted conception. Cheong Y et al, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2008, Issue 4.

This group of researchers analyzed clinical trial data of acupuncture and IVF and concluded that acupuncture is a useful addition to IVF. This information was published as a Cochrane Review.

Acupuncture and assisted conception. Cheong Y et al, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2009 Issue 1

A more recent version of this data base by the same authors concluded that there is an increase in live birth rate when acupuncture is performed on day of embryo transfer.

The Role of Acupuncture in the Management of Subfertility. Ng E H et al, Fertility & Sterility 2008, Jul;90(1):1-13

Another review of the literature from Hong Kong suggests that the positive effect of acupuncture in the treatment of infertility may be related to the central sympathetic inhibition by the endorphin system, the change in uterine blood flow and motility, and stress reduction.

It is also worth noting that some research has suggested a lack of, or even negative effect for acupuncture on pregnancy rates. (Fratterelli FL et al Fertil Steril 2008 Vol 90 Suppl 1, pg S105, Craig L.B et al, Fertil Steril 2007 Vol 88, Suppl 1, pg S40). While these and other studies are a small minority, they help us learn about which techniques work, better define who the best candidates for acupuncture are and what circumstances acupuncture positively affects the IVF process.

Most recently the research has begun to focus on acupuncture's role in stress reduction and pregnancy outcomes. Our clinical experience has convinced us that acupuncture plays an important part in reducing the physical side effects of intense stress and anxiety. Future research will help us learn more about the mechanisms involved in this process. To see a more complete review of the literature to date, [click here](#).

(http://www.triangleacupunctureclinic.com/learn/fertility/fertility_and_acupuncture_research)

To learn more about acupuncture for fertility enhancement visit, www.triangleacupunctureclinic.com or call 933-4480 to set up an appointment.