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# 15 TIPS TO INCREASE MALE FERTILITY

Whether you're just starting to try and get pregnant, or have been trying for a long time, making lifestyle changes to increase your fertility is essential. Lifestyle habits are rarely the sole cause of infertility, however making changes could possibly push you over the "infertile" line if your sperm health is borderline. And these tips may even help fertility treatments work better. Using information by Rachel Gurevich on About.com along with other sources we have 15 tips below to help you increase your fertility.

## ***TIP #1 - CONSIDER ADDING SOME ANTIOXIDANTS TO YOUR DIET***

You've probably heard of antioxidants as cancer and heart disease fighters but they may also increase fertility. In short, antioxidants are substances that prevent cell damage from free radicals. Free radicals are produced naturally by your body when it breaks down your food, but are also created when you're exposed to things like toxic chemicals, radiation, cigarette smoke, or pollution. Remember that sperm are also cells, so it makes sense that adding antioxidants to your diet may help improve their health. In fact, researchers have found that men who took antioxidants in supplement form had less DNA damaged sperm than men who did not take antioxidants. Some researchers found that couples had higher pregnancy rates if the men took additional antioxidants. There are many antioxidants, but the ones that have been specifically studied in regards to improving sperm health are:

- Zinc - found in oysters, crab, red meat, poultry, and beans.
- Vitamin C - found in many fruits and vegetables, with the highest levels found in red peppers, kiwi, oranges, and grapefruit.
- Selenium - found in high amounts in brazil nuts (1 oz provides 780% of your daily recommended value). Also found in tuna, cod, beef, turkey and chicken.
- Vitamin E - found in nuts, seeds, oils, and leafy greens.
- Folic Acid - found in beef liver, leafy green vegetables, fruits, beans, and peas, and often in fortified grains.
- Lycopene - found in tomatoes, apricots, pink grapefruit, and watermelon.

You can try to add more of these foods into your diet, or consider taking a supplement. As with all things, moderation is still best. Don't eat too many of these foods. (Brazil nuts should not be eaten every day, for example.) Also, because some supplements can interfere with other medications, it's best to consult with a doctor first. You can also ask your doctor about the proper amount of antioxidant foods in your diet.

## ***TIP #2 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: WATCH YOUR SOY INTAKE***

Too much soy may impact your sperm counts, according to a research study that looked at eating habits. Just because you don't eat tofu doesn't mean this study won't apply to you. Soy is found in a number of foods today, including fake meat patties, energy bars, and health drinks. You may be surprised at how much soy you're eating if you take a close look at your diet. The study found men who ate high amounts of soy had lower sperm counts than men who did not.

In fact, men who had the highest soy intake had 41 million/ml less sperm than men who did not eat soy foods. Soy, however, may not be all bad. Other researchers have found that soy may help prevent prostate cancer. So what should you do? The study on soy and sperm counts found that men who were overweight or obese had a stronger reaction to the soy. Also, the higher the soy intake, the lower the sperm concentration was.

If you're overweight or obese, go real easy on your soy intake. And for everyone else, just don't eat loads and loads of it.

*(Don't have soy milk with your cereal, a soy-based health shake, and then soy burgers all in one day.)*

### ***TIP #3 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: QUIT SMOKING***

I'm sure you already know many good reasons to kick your smoking habit. If you weren't convinced yet, now you have one more reason: Quitting smoking may increase your fertility.

Studies on smoking and semen quality found that smoking affects many aspects of sperm health, including decreased sperm counts, decreased sperm motility (the swimming ability of the sperm), and sperm shape. If you're going through fertility treatments, it doesn't mean you're off the hook and can keep on smoking. Researchers have also found that smoking had a strong effect on treatment success when using IVF with ICSI fertility treatments

### ***TIP #4 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: AVOID TOXIC CHEMICALS IN THE WORKPLACE***

If you're having difficulty conceiving, you may want to look at your job. Farmers, painters, and varnishers as a group have a much higher chance of infertility and significantly lower sperm counts, compared to men who work in other fields. Metal works and welders, as a group, had higher incidences of poor sperm motility. The cause of these higher incidences of infertility and poor sperm health are not known. But one possibility is that the chemicals found in paint, varnish, metal working, and farming (pesticides for example) may damage sperm. For metal workers, it could also possibly be a problem with overheating, which can lower sperm counts.

What should you do if you work in one of the above fields? It's a difficult question with no easy answer. While researchers found poor sperm health for men who worked in these occupations, they have not looked at what will happen if they change jobs, or whether or not there are ways to avoid damaging your fertility health while still working in these positions. Common sense dictates that avoiding contact with toxins in the workplace as much as possible would be vital, whether that means wearing a mask, wearing gloves, or just keeping your body well-covered and clean from chemicals.

### ***TIP #5 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: KEEP THINGS COOL***

You may be able to increase your fertility by keeping cool "down there". The male reproductive organs are outside of the body for a reason -- to keep them at temperatures lower than 98.6 F, our normal body temperature. High temperatures can damage sperm so it is best to avoid hot tubs or taking long hot baths. But even if you're not the hot-tubbing type, there are other things you may do every day that increase your scrotal temperatures. Sitting for long periods of time increased scrotal temperatures, according to research. If you have a desk job, or even a long commute to work, be sure to get up and walk around now and then. This is good for concentration, too, so you can boost your fertility and your energy all at once!

Speaking of long commutes, don't turn on your seat heater in the winter. Seat heaters, a feature found in some cars that warms up the seat of your car for cold winter mornings, can lead to higher than normal scrotal temperatures. Also, don't sit with your laptop in your lap. Both keeping your legs tightly together to balance the laptop, and the heat generated by the laptop itself, can lead to higher than normal scrotal temperatures. Instead, place your laptop on a desk or table.

Whether or not boxers are more fertility-friendly than briefs is a matter of debate. I found one study that said it did make a difference, and another study that found no difference. As long as you're not wearing extremely tight, non-breathable fabric, whether or not you prefer boxers or briefs probably doesn't matter.

### ***TIP #6 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: AIM FOR A HEALTHY WEIGHT***

One way to increase your fertility is to bring your weight to a healthier level. Being over or underweight can upset hormone balance, leading to lower sperm counts. Not sure if your weight is within the healthy zone? Check your body mass index (BMI). Your BMI is a measurement of your weight that also takes into account your height.

In a study on thin men, they found that men with a BMI less than 20 had lower sperm concentration and a 28.1% lower total sperm count. They also found that FSH, a hormone that plays a role in the reproductive system, was higher in slim men. In a separate study, men with obesity had lower testosterone levels. Also, as BMI levels went up, the incidence of lower sperm counts went up. For example, for men with a normal BMI, 5.32% were found to have low sperm count. In overweight men, 9.52% had low sperm counts, and in obese men, 15.62% had low sperm counts

## ***TIP #7 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: GO EASY ON THE ALCOHOL***

Too much alcohol can decrease your fertility.

A study looking at alcoholics found that only 12% of the men had completely normal sperm counts and health, compared to 37% of non-smokers and non-alcoholics. They found that as the amount the men drank went up, sperm counts dropped, normal sperm shape decreased, and sperm motility worsened.

Another study, this one looking at couples going through IVF treatment, found that for every additional drink a man consumed per day, the risk of conception not leading to a live birth increased by 2 to 8 times. This was especially true if the drinking occurred within a month of the IVF treatment.

However, other studies have found no relationship between male fertility and just a few drinks. What should you do? Moderate drinking is probably okay, especially if you reserve those drinks to a few times a week, instead of daily. However, if you're going through IVF treatment, you might consider cutting out alcohol for the time being.

## ***TIP #8 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: TREAT UNDERLYING MEDICAL CONDITIONS***

Treating underlying medical conditions may help increase your fertility.

Untreated diabetes may lead to infertility, specifically causing retrograde ejaculation. Even if you're without symptoms, you might want to get your blood sugars tested if you have been diagnosed with retrograde ejaculation. Up to one third of people with diabetes are unaware that they have the disease.

An untreated infection of the reproductive system or urinary tract can cause infertility in men. For example, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) may lead to reduced sperm motility, and repeated STD infection may lead to scarring, which can block the passage of semen. Some infections have no symptoms besides infertility.

Other medical conditions that can lead to infertility are thyroid disease, Crohn's disease, celiac disease, Cushing's syndrome, and anemia. These diseases are also commonly missed. For example, it's not uncommon for someone to walk around with thyroid problems for years before getting a diagnosis. Be sure to get well-check by your primary care doctor before you start trying to conceive, and if you suspect something's not quite right with how you're feeling, voice these concerns. That nagging fatigue that never seems to leave may be something more.

## ***TIP #9 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: KEEP YOUR TEETH AND GUMS HEALTHY***

Keeping your teeth and gums healthy may help increase your fertility. Who knew?

Bacteriospermia, or the presence of bacteria in semen, has been linked to male infertility. In an interesting research study, 23% of men with bacteria present in their semen did not improve after treatment with antibiotics alone. The researchers conducted dental exams on some of the men who did not improve with antibiotics, and found untreated dental problems present in all of them. In a test group, the patients' dental problems were treated. In a control group, the dental problems were not addressed. Six months after dental treatment, researchers tested the semen again. Two-thirds of the test group had improved semen health, while those in the control group who had not been treated still had poor semen health.

Increasing your fertility is just one more reason to make the dreaded trip to the dentist every six months.

## ***TIP #10 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: HAVE FREQUENT SEX***

You already know that if you want to have a baby, you need to have sex around the time of ovulation. Having frequent sex all month long, however, may help increase your fertility. Research studies have found that semen health is best when sex occurred less than two days prior.

One study of about 3,000 men looked at sperm motility and morphology (shape) in relation to the number of days they abstained from sex. They found that in men with low sperm counts, peak sperm motility occurred after one day of abstinence. The peak sperm morphology occurred after zero to two days of abstinence. For men with normal sperm counts, sperm health was significantly decreased after 10 days of abstinence.

To keep your sperm in tip-top shape, you should try to have sex at least twice a week, and not

## **TIP #11 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: TRY ACUPUNCTURE AND HERBS**

Some men credit acupuncture treatment with improved sperm quality. Acupuncture removes blockages in flow of energy, and is a relaxing calming experience. Make sure you choose a qualified acupuncturist.

### **Acupuncture and Infertility**

The research on acupuncture and infertility is ongoing, and the topic is controversial. Some studies have been too small to prove a definitive connection to improved pregnancy rates, and some studies contradict each other in their results.

With that said, here are a few of possible benefits of acupuncture, according to the preliminary research:

- Improved pregnancy rates during IVF treatment cycles, when acupuncture takes place on the day of embryo transfer
- Increased blood flow to the uterus, leading to an improved endometrial lining
- Reduced stress and anxiety levels
- Possible improvement in ovulation for women with PCOS
- Possible improvement in sperm count and quality in men with infertility
- Possible regulation of gonadotropin-releasing hormone, which in turn could help regulate ovulation

### **Acupuncture and Male Fertility**

Acupuncture treats low sperm motility, low sperm count and poor sperm morphology. Preparing for Pregnancy can begin several months prior to conception. If both partners adopt a pre-conceptual healthcare program including fertility acupuncture, reflexology and nutrition for at least 3-4 months prior to conception, it is possible to have an impact on the health of both the egg and sperm and reproductive outcomes.

A month of male fertility acupuncture and sperm improvement program is recommended because the continuous process called "spermatogenesis", by which stem cells develop into mature spermatozoa requires about 72-74 days.

### **Six week Male Fertility and Sperm Improvement Acupuncture**

Research shows that even an intensive 6 week male fertility and sperm improvement program, consisting of 2 male fertility acupuncture appointments per week prior or during IVF or fertility acupuncture treatment is beneficial.

Normal Parameters for Male Infertility according to the current world health organization (WHO) standards for assessing male infertility are:

- Volume: More than 1 millilitre (ml)
- Count: More than 20 million sperm per ml
- Motility: More than 50% moving sperm per ml
- Morphology: More than 14% normal forms (i.e no deformities of the head, midpiece or tail).

### **How Acupuncture can Enhance Fertility?**

- Improves sperm parameters
- Improves pregnancy rates of IVF treatment
- Regulates menstrual cycles
- Regulate hormones by reducing stress
- Reduces miscarriages
- Lessens uterine contractions after embryo transfer
- Improves blood flow to testicles, ovaries and uterus
- Improves ovarian function; encourages production of follicles; enhances their quality
- Improves thickness of uterine wall lining
- Aids relaxation
- Lessens side effects of fertility medication
- Enhances immune system

### **Acupuncture Research for Male Infertility**

- Pei, J; Strehler, E; Noss, U; Abt, M; Piomboni, P; Baccetti, B & Sterzik, K 1005, *Quantitative evaluation of spermatozoa ultrastructure after acupuncture treatment for idiopathic male infertility*, Fertility Sterility, 84(1), Pg 141-147
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## ***TIP #12 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: GET SOME SUN DAILY***

Spending some time in the sun helps to boost testosterone, improve vitamin D levels and reduces level of melatonin which suppresses fertility.

## ***TIP #13 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: AVOID STRESS, HAVE FUN AND MORE SEX!***

Often people find that they fall pregnant once they stop obsessing about their failure to get pregnant, relax and enjoy other great things in their lives. Whilst infertility is a difficult and sometimes seemingly impossible situation to face, stress does not help with solutions. Enrich your life with happy fun relaxing activities, and more importantly, do not lose the joys of sex by just focusing on making babies.

## ***TIP #14 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: OTHER SUPPLEMENTS***

In addition to a general multi-vitamin, some of the supplements which your doctor may recommend, include 500mg of L-Carnitine for sperm motility and count, 500mg of L-Arginine to help improve motility, 15mg of zinc for sperm production, this is often taken with 1mg of copper, 200mcg of selenium to improve sperm quality and testosterone, 30mg of Coenzyme which increases sperm count and motility, 400iu of vitamin E which helps with sperm motility and ability to penetrate egg, 1000mg of Vitamin C which stops sperm from clumping, 100mg each of Vitamin B complex (especially Vitamin B12) which helps sperm count and motility; folic acid and Omega 3, 6 and 9.

Some men also swear by the efficacy of taking 500mg of the Peruvian herb Maca. In clinical trials, subjects taking a derivative of the Peruvian Andes herb maca called gelatinized maca reported increase sexual desire of 180% and sperm count increase of 200%. Please consult a qualified nutritionist before taking any herbal remedies. Please also ensure that your doctor is happy with your taking any herbal products.

## ***TIP #15 TO INCREASE FERTILITY: SLEEP MORE***

Sleep is essential for good sperm health and it helps replenish testosterone.

## **REFERENCE**

1. Gurevich, R 2011, *10 Tips To Increase Fertility for Men*, viewed 2011, [http://infertility.about.com/od/alternativetreatments/ss/to\\_increase\\_fertility\\_male\\_2.htm](http://infertility.about.com/od/alternativetreatments/ss/to_increase_fertility_male_2.htm)