The Most Common Fertility Problems and Their Solutions

By Lisa Olson

Lisa Olson is The Author of The Best Selling “Pregnancy Miracle” Book:
The Only Holistic and Ancient Chinese 5-Step System That Will Teach YOU How To Quickly and Permanently Cure Your Infertility and Naturally Give Birth to Healthy Babies!
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Introduction

Most people assume that when the time comes to start a family they will be able to conceive within a couple of months. Unfortunately for many, getting pregnant isn’t as easy as they had hoped. More than 7% of couples will face varying degrees of infertility this year alone. That equals a lot of frustrated couples seeking answers to their fertility questions.

While there can be hundreds of different reasons why one couple can conceive and another can not, there does seem to be certain fertility issues that are more common than others. From hormones that are out of whack to poor semen quality or even a miscalculation of ovulation (making you miss your chance at conception), every couple’s fertility is unique and must be thoroughly investigated in order to solve the puzzle to their inability to conceive the child of their dreams.

In the following report we will discuss the 4 most common fertility problems couples face, and offer basic solutions to help you both figure out what is keeping you from becoming parents, plus how to overcome those obstacles.

The Role Acupuncture & Chinese Herbs Will Play in Your Fertility Recovery

But, before we delve any deeper into the many causes of infertility, let’s begin with a basic discussion on the role that acupuncture and Chinese herbs play in
fertility recovery. As you read the following report you will notice a pattern when it comes to these two Traditional Chinese Medicine remedies. Acupuncture and herbs are a common treatment for most fertility problems. Therefore, we deemed it necessary to begin our discussion of common fertility problems and their solutions with a brief discussion on these two very prominent treatment options.

According to Chinese medicine practices, acupuncture is very therapeutic when it comes to preparing the body for conception; helping to conceive; and supporting a healthy pregnancy.

During an acupuncture session, small needles are inserted into the skin. Not far enough to induce pain, the needles are only slightly pricked through the outer layer of the skin in order to stimulate the body’s qi, or energy. Blood flow too can be energized through this energy balancing procedure. By releasing blocked energy form the body’s natural meridians (the paths all internal energy flows through), Chinese acupuncture therapists hope to:

- better develop ovarian follicles
- tonify the blood and increase circulation
- promote a more regular ovulation
- promote a healthy egg implantation

Although acupuncture has been used for thousands of years in the East to help aid fertility efforts, Western doctors are just beginning to see its benefits. More
and more often in recent years, infertility doctors are using a combination of acupuncture and other more common fertility treatments to accomplish these goals:

• correct hormone imbalances
• increase blood flow to the uterus which helps to thicken the endometrial lining
• improve blood flow to the ovaries to help strengthen egg production and release
• reduce uterine spasm to help increase the chance of implantation
• relieve stress
• eliminate inflammation throughout the body to improve immune system function
• increase sperm production, quality and motility

Herbal therapy too is on the rise in all medical arenas, but especially in regards to supplementing fertility treatments. When it comes to tonifying the blood, increasing the immune system and boosting your chances of getting pregnant, the right mix of herbs can help in these important ways:

• encouraging the build-up of a stronger uterine lining
• enhancing follicle growth
• increasing natural cervical mucus
• stimulating hormone production and release
• increase circulation, especially to the uterus and ovaries
• improving the quality of the man’s sperm

Of course figuring out what may be keeping you from getting pregnant requires a bit of detective work by both you and your medical team. The first thing your doctor will likely do is take a detailed medical history of both prospective parents (no, infertility is not just a woman’s problem). A comprehensive medical history usually requires a review of these main infertility causes:

• your personal anatomy
• hormone imbalances
• metabolic imbalances
• autoimmune reactions
• genetics
• environmental issues
• psychological concerns

Why review these areas of your personal health and well-being? More often than not infertility issues stem from a problem or concern in one of those major categories.

When you first meet with an infertility doctor you may expect him/her to run a lot of tests, but that usually isn’t the avenue they pursue. A thorough exam typically begins with a long litany of questions about your general health, stress, lifestyle, relationship, menstrual periods, diet, family history, habits, sexual history, infections, exercise routine and even where you work. While these questions
may seem totally unrelated to your inability to get pregnant on your own, the
answers you give can give the doctor some important clues to the root cause of
your infertility.
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SIDEBAR: What Types of Questions Can You Expect?

You may be wondering exactly what kinds of questions your doctor may ask to help diagnosis your individual fertility issues. Below you will find a sampling of questions in several different areas that you may be asked to answer:

(Fertility Questions):

- your age
- how long you have been trying to conceive
- any fertility treatments tried
- when you think you ovulate (and what makes you think so)
- any medications you have taken to ovulate (including herbs)
- any evaluations you have had regarding your fertility health and their results
- whether or not you have had any successful pregnancies
- the number of miscarriages you have had

(Sexual History)

- Do you have a single partner at the moment? How long have you been together?
- How often you have intercourse
- What your libido is like
- Whether or not you use lubricants or douches regularly
- If you experience any pain during intercourse
- If the male partner experiences any performance difficulties
- The types of contraceptives you have used in the past

(Menstrual Cycle History)

- how old you were when you began menstruating
- what your period was like in the beginning
- what your monthly schedule is like
- how your flow is (light, heavy, regular, irregular)
- whether or not you experience signs of PMS before or during your period – if so, what they are
- what symptoms you have before your period (breast tenderness, staining, increase vaginal discharge; odd smells, etc)

(Pregnancy History)

- if your PMS symptoms last longer some months than others
- if you have been pregnant in the past – what was the result (miscarriage, live birth, premature birth)
- whether or not you have ever had an abortion – if so, how many, what was your age, and were their any complications
(Gynecological History)

- whether or not you have ever had a D & C or other gynecological surgery
- if you have ever had an abnormal pap smear
- if you have ever had an STD
- if you suffer from repeated yeast infections
- if you have ever had an ovarian cyst
- if you have ever had fibroids
- if you have ever had inflammatory pelvic disease
- if you have any type of thyroid condition
- if you have any abnormalities in your vagina, cervix, uterus, ovaries or breasts

(Hormones)

- whether or not you have oily skin or acne
- whether you suffer form excessive hair in unusual places on the body (face, breasts, etc)
- if you have recently experienced any type of hair loss
- if your breast are overly sensitive
- if you have any unusual discharge form your nipples
(Overall Health)

- rate your general health (poor, good, excellent)
- list any chronic health issues/concerns
- your weight
- your height
- how much you exercise
- how much sleep you get
- do you smoke, drink or use drugs
- list any herbs or supplements you take on a regular basis
- list any environmental toxins you have been in contact with
- list all allergies
- your blood type
- do you get regular headaches?
- List all hospitalizations/ treatments/surgeries
- Rate your overall mental health
- List any psychiatric drugs you have ever taken (or are taking)
- Explain your average mood
- Explain your relationship
- Explain your work environment
- Rate your overall stress level
(Family History)

- list all the diseases and conditions experienced by your immediate family members including your parents, siblings and grandparents (diabetes, heart conditions, cancer, lupus, etc)
- list any fertility, pregnancy or miscarriage issues experienced by family members
- list any deceased siblings and the age and condition which preceded their death

(Diet & Lifestyle)

- describe your daily diet
- do you follow any pre-determined diet or lifestyle (vegan, vegetarian, Atkins, etc)
- do you eat fresh – if so how much and which kinds
- list the types of meat you eat and how much per week
- do you eat lunch meat regularly?
- List any food intolerances/allergies
- How much coffee or tea do you drink?
- How uh alcohol do you drink?
- Do you smoke? If so, how many cigarettes per day?
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Once you have undergone this intensive questioning, the next step is, of course, the physical exam. Women typically expect a routine OBGYN exam at this point and are often surprised to learn that nothing is routine when it comes to searching for infertility causes. Of course a complete internal exam is necessary, but your doctor will also be performing a comprehensive physical exam that includes checking all your parts (both inside and out). A good fertility specialist will be so thorough with his/her exam that you will probably walk out of the office feeling like every inch of your body has been examined. Men too will likely undergo a similar exam, as the doctor will be looking for any health issue that could be related to the couple’s infertility.

Once the detailed interview and physical examinations are complete, most couple’s begin the fertility testing stage of diagnosis. This can involve things as simple as a complete blood workup and saliva testing to more involved procedures such as semen analysis, ultrasounds and even MRI’s. Some of these tests will need to be done at certain times of the month, so be patient. Getting a full workup done can take several weeks, but it is necessary in order to give the doctor a clearer picture of what’s going on in your body.

With dozens of individual tests available to delve deeper into certain physical aspects of infertility, it is important for your doctor to get an overall look at your ability to conceive. This is done by starting with these main areas of interest:
• Postcoital Issues: These are tests used to determine if the man’s sperm are even making it to their destination. This includes looking for poor sperm quality; hostile cervical mucus or antibodies in the body that could be killing off sperm before it reaches the uterus for fertilization; or even lingering infection. The good news is that most Postcoital issues can be easily remedied.

• Infections: infection in either partners can inhibit pregnancy, so cultures are taken to make sure that neither is experiencing any chronic bacterial or viral flare-ups that could be the cause of their inability to conceive.

• Hormone Imbalances: hormones can be a big culprit in fertility for both sexes. Any disruption in the proper release of hormones (in the right amount) can keep a female egg from being released on time; create an inadequate uterine lining for nurturing a fertilized egg; or can even keep a man’s sperm from having the energy to make the long journey through the cervix. There are a variety of hormone tests that must be competed at different times of the menstrual cycle in women, so a full battery of testing can take a few weeks to complete.

• Structural Problems: Either partner can have a structural issue that can make it difficult to conceive. For this reason men usually undergo both a comprehensive physical exam as well as a testicular sonogram to check for structural issues, while women undergo certain types of x-rays and sonograms that can give the doctors a close-up look of her fallopian tubes, ovaries, egg supply and uterus.
Once you have both undergone a series of tests, the odds are good that your doctor will have some answers for you -- less than 10% of infertile couples never receive a firm diagnosis for their infertility issues. Still, even when a diagnosis is made, the road ahead can be fraught with frustration and heartaches. Treating infertility – no matter what the underlying cause – is rarely simple and never easy. From diagnosis and treatment to eventual parenthood, infertility is tough on a couple emotionally and physically. Still, there is hope. You can have the baby of your dreams if you are willing to find out what’s wrong and stay the course when it comes to treating the disorder stopping you from getting pregnant.

Now, let’s look at some of the most common causes of infertility that your doctor will likely be looking for. Whether you have a firm diagnosis or not right now, reviewing these common problems and their solutions can go a long way to helping you better understand what lies ahead. Education is an important step to dealing with your own fertility and making the changes necessary to overcome your personal fertility roadblocks.
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Hormonal Issues

Hormones are vital when it comes to conception. Any disruption in proper hormone production and release can cause some serious trouble in getting pregnant. Something as simple as stress at work or a basic infection can cause a delay in hormone release in both sexes that can inhibit a pregnancy. Now, let’s look at a few common hormone and endocrine problems that can make it difficult – or even impossible – to have a baby.

Luteal Phase Defects (LPD)

Many women who cannot get pregnant or who may experience repeated miscarriage often suffer from a luteal phase defect, which simply means that the luteal phase of their cycle (the time between ovulation and their menstrual flow) is too short to develop a thick enough uterine lining to support a fertilized egg. This can either result in an inability for the fertilized egg to implant in the first place, or an inability to thrive, thus resulting in a very early miscarriage. Some women actually miscarry every month without realizing it believing that they are simply having a regular period.

The cause of this disorder is generally low progesterone levels, although low FSH and LH levels can also be to blame. Some signs that you may suffer with a luteal phase defect include:
• Ovulating before day 10 of your cycle or after day 20 (this can be determined by using an ovulation predictor test or charting your basal body temperature and cervical mucus).

• Pre-menstrual spotting

• Menopausal symptoms

When a LPD is suspected, your doctor will likely request one or more of the following tests:

* **Progesterone Levels** – progesterone levels must be scheduled throughout the cycle (typically on days 21, 23 and 25) to see whether or not the progesterone in your body is sufficient.

* **Prolactin Levels** – elevated prolactin levels can cause a decrease in progesterone

* **Thyroid Function** – if the thyroid is not functioning properly it could result in lowered hormone levels or ill-timed hormone release. Thyroid function is usually monitored with a TSH blood test.

* **Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome** – A common disorder among infertile women, PCOS can cause the ovaries to fail to release an egg for fertilization or for release to happen at the wrong time in the cycle. Tests for PCOS usually include a fasting glucose blood test as well as LH and FSH levels.

Once a diagnosis of LPD is made, there are several options for treatment. In many cases fertility drugs such as Clomid are used to boost progesterone levels and make a pregnancy possible.
As the awareness of side effects (including multiple births) of using these drugs is increased, more and more couples are opting for natural methods of fixing LPD. Traditional Chinese Medicine offers some good options for treating this disorder without the use of dangerous drugs.

Chinese Medicine considers LPD to be a whole body imbalance; not just one of the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle. According to Chinese medical practitioners, the luteal phase is governed by Yang energy in the body. It is this yang energy that creates the yin energy which is necessary during the follicular stage of the cycle. The transformation from one type of energy to another (the yang to the yin) is caused by the movement of qi and blood during ovulation. Any disruption of this energy flow can cause LPD. It doesn’t matter whether you have too much or too little yin or yang at certain stages or if circulation is bad and the energy can not move properly, the fact is that if these two energies can not move freely and transform at the right times of the woman’s cycle, a pregnancy is impossible.

Luckily, there are a variety of herbs that can be used in conjunction with acupuncture treatments to help free blocked energies and help balance out yin and yang in order to better balance the hormone levels in the body.
Chasteberry is an excellent herbal choice for treating LPD since it helps to lengthen the luteal phase and hasten the LH surge to ovulation. Recommended dose: 16 drops of tincture twice a day from ovulation to your bleeding time begins.

Red Raspberry Leaf can be used in a soothing tea to help increase blood flow and circulation to the uterus which can help to free blocked energies and increase uterine health.

Acupuncture too is a wonderful treatment for LPD. It is used to free blocked meridians and restore proper energy flow throughout the entire body, with a concentration on the reproductive system. Be sure to find a qualified acupuncture therapist who specializes in treating infertility.
Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) is one of the main causes in female infertility these days. Due to an inability of the ovaries to release an egg for fertilization, pregnancy is impossible. Oftentimes it is PCOS that causes LPD, which only results in a more complicated infertility diagnosis and treatment plan.

It is a hormone imbalance that works something like this that causes PCOS: the follicles in the ovaries fill with fluid as needed for egg release, however none gets along to actually push the egg forward through the fallopian tubes on its way to the uterus for fertilization. Because of this ovulation does not – and can not – occur. This prohibits the possibility of a pregnancy ever taking place.

To make matters worse some of these fluid-filled follicles turn into cysts which make androgens (so-called male hormones), which can further prevent ovulation. This creates a vicious cycle that can ultimately cause the menses to stop altogether, further aggravating the problem.

For some women, ovulation does still occur, but too late in the cycle to result in a good egg. These women tend to not respond well to fertility drugs. Although ovulation is restored, their eggs are of poor quality and either do not get fertilized or if fertilized do not survive. These cysts are a result of poor fluid circulation in the reproductive system.
So, how do you know if you suffer from PCOS? There are definitely some telltale signs like missed or scanty periods; irregular periods; and even a lack of common ovulation signs (a rise in BBT; a change in cervical mucus; etc). Still, there are some women who show no ‘real” signs of PCOS and may actually believe that they are ovulating every month. These women do tend to have some subtle signs of PCOS, however, that include: hair in unwanted areas of the body (chest, face, lower abdomen); high cholesterol; too much weight (especially around the middle giving them an apple appearance); and higher than normal blood glucose levels.

For this reason, one of the best ways to treat PCOS in a more natural manner is to begin eating a well-balanced, low carb diet and exercising more. By concentrating on eating more protein and healthy fats it is easier to stabilize blood sugar levels and regulate hormones.
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Case Study

When Amy learned that she had PCOS her first line of attack was to get her diet in tip-top shape. She began a disciplined Atkins diet to help get the protein and good fats she needed to help stabilize her blood sugar levels and within a few months she was pregnant – without further treatment!

Acupuncture too, can be used to calm the neuroendocrine system and stabilize hormones to encourage proper ovulation. Herbs are also common among natural healers, who use a combination of ovulation inducing herbs and circulation improving herbs to rebalance the reproductive system and get those hormones back to normal.

What are some other ways in which you can help tame the effects of PCOS and actually get your body working the way it should? Here are a few PCOS tips to try:

- Lose just 10% of your body weight and reduce symptoms of PCOS almost immediately.
- Increase your daily intake of essential fatty acids
- Reduce your intake of carbohydrates
- Eat a well balanced diet filled with plenty of antioxidant-rich fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Get at least a half hour’s worth of exercise everyday to help boost your metabolism
• Reduce stress
• Begin regular acupuncture treatments
• Add some potent ovulation inducing herbs to your health regime such as false unicorn root

One important note here: when treating PCOS with more natural remedies be sure to give yourself at least 3 cycles before trying to conceive. It may take this long to produce healthy strong eggs that can withstand a pregnancy. Otherwise you may find yourself pregnant only to experience the heartache of an early miscarriage.

Case Study

Sharon discovered this the hard way. Shortly after beginning a high protein diet and undergoing acupuncture treatments for her PCOS she did indeed get pregnant. Unfortunately she experienced an early miscarriage weeks later. Lucky for her, her doctor explained what likely happened: her body was now able to conceive, but her eggs hadn’t had a chance to build up the right amount of strength. She waited a few more months to try and again and when she did, Sharon got pregnant (and stayed pregnant) within 2 months!
Premature Ovarian Syndrome (POF)

In about 1 % of women, Premature Ovarian Syndrome (POF) is the cause of their inability to conceive. Often confused with early menopause, POF occurs when estrogen levels in the body decrease and FSH levels increase, which causes the follicles in the ovaries to stop maturing eggs for fertilization. When this happens, the woman’s body begins to show signs of menopause such as a loss of a monthly period, night sweats, concentration problems, hot flashes and vaginal dryness.

POF can be caused by a variety of issues including infections, genetics, diabetes and thyroid issues. Certain cancer treatments can also cause a fluctuation in hormones that causes POF. While hormone therapy can often restore normal hormone levels, it may not be able to restore fertility once POF has restricted the follicles.

Eastern philosophies associates POF with a yin deficiency with heat. To treat this devastating fertility disease, Traditional Chinese Medicine relies on herbs and acupuncture to encourage hormone balance, promote ovulation and encourage dormant follicles to begin maturing and releasing healthy eggs once again.
It is important to understand, however, that if there are no follicles left neither traditional pharmaceutical treatments nor Chinese Medicine practices can restore a woman’s fertility.

**Case Study**

All-too-often fertility specialists tell a woman that she must use donor eggs in order to conceive when faced with a PCOS diagnosis. That is exactly what happened to Renee. At 32, she was suffering with basic PCOS signs: anxiousness, light periods lasting only a day to two; night sweats and an inability to get pregnant. Her doctor diagnosed PCOS and said there was no hope to have a child naturally. Renee looked for a second opinion. The next doctor she met with discovered that Renee was lucky: she still had follicles. So, he began her on an herbal therapy designed to help her body produce more estrogen. It took about 8 months, but eventually her body responded and she did indeed conceive.

Want to give yourself the best chance of conceiving despite your PCOS? Try these simple tips:

1. See an herbalist for natural ways to boost your estrogen levels
2. Begin regular acupuncture sessions to help promote ovulation
3. Ask your doctor for help
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Early Pregnancy Loss

For decades women suffered with early pregnancy loss and never knew it. Today however, with such sophisticated pregnancy tests available, most women know within a few days of a missed period whether or not they are pregnant. If you have good reason to believe that you are pregnant (your nipples are swollen and tender; you have a metallic taste in your mouth; you just feel different), but still seem to be getting your periods (albeit maybe a few days late), you may want to discuss with your doctor the possibility that you are suffering with early pregnancy loss. A blood test before your scheduled period can tell you and your doctor if indeed a pregnancy has occurred.

Case Study

Andrea was desperate to get pregnant. After three years of taking fertility drugs she could not understand why she wasn’t getting pregnant until one doctor finally realized that she was getting pregnant (almost every month). Her problem was not getting pregnant, it was staying pregnant. Once she and her doctor realized that it was a low progesterone level that was causing her to miscarriage just days or weeks after conception, they were able to try a new treatment and it worked! Like Andrea, once you know that those “periods’ aren’t really periods at all, but early miscarriages, you can begin to look for a cause. Without the proper environment for an embryo to grow, the body will expel even a fertilized egg.
This according to Chinese medicine is called a kidney qi deficiency. Some of the most common causes of early pregnancy loss include:

- low progesterone levels
- a chronic infection (of either partner)
- killer sperm cells
- poor uterine lining
- endometrial polyps

The key to treating early pregnancy loss is to find out its root cause. Here are a few basic things you can do to help figure out if early miscarriage is your real fertility problem:

- Check your BBT chart to see if you notice a sharp drop in your temperature right before your period starts. If so, it may indicate a pregnancy/miscarriage.
- Check for subtle signs of a pregnancy in the later stages of your cycle. This may include breast tenderness, fatigue or even an unusual taste in your mouth

Luteinized Unruptured Follicle Syndrome (LUFS)

A relatively rare condition, Luteinized Unruptured Syndrome occurs when a follicle does indeed mature an egg, but fails to release it for fertilization. Even though LH hormones surge, ovulation never occurs, causing infertility. What makes this condition so devastating is that it is so difficult to diagnosis. Since all hormone levels rise and fall as they should, your doctor may believe ovulation is
taking place when in reality it is not. The only way to diagnosis a case of LUFS is to undergo a series of ultrasounds to watch the collapse of certain follicles at ovulation time. Sometimes laparoscopy is also used.

Chinese practitioners call LUFS stagnation. While western doctors tend to rely on IVF or HCG injections to solve LUFS issues, Chinese medical practitioners like to use an herbal formula called Zao Jiao Ci to encourage follicle rupture along with acupuncture.

**Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) Issues**

FSH is a vital component to a woman’s ability to get pregnant. It is this basic hormone which spurs the ovaries into growing and maturing the follicles that will ultimately release an egg for fertilization. If the follicles are not given a sufficient supply of FSH (either too much or too little), they will not release a viable egg. This can happen for a lot of reasons: there may not be enough estrogen in the body; you could have an infection; or your body may be low on quality eggs. Women with high levels of FSH want to stay clear of fertility drugs since they will only make the problem worse. Low FSH can often be treated with low levels of estrogen. Reducing stress can also help to normalize FHS levels!
Case Study

Meghan was devastated to learn that she had high FSH levels that were keeping her from conceiving the baby she and her husband longed for. Everything she read indicated that a pregnancy would not be possible. Thankfully, her doctor knew better. He ran more tests and discovered that she suffered with a secondary fertility problem: scar tissue blocking her fallopian tubes. Although her high FSH levels could have been aggravating a tough situation, it wasn’t the only cause of her infertility. Once the scar tissue was removed via laparoscopy, her doctor urged her to lower her stress to help her body be better able to regulate its hormones and ovulation. Between the stress reduction techniques she implemented and the removal of the scar tissue in her fallopian tubes, Meghan was able to give birth 18 months later.

Maintaining the proper level of FSH in men is also important since it is the hormone which stimulates sperm production. If a man’s FSH levels get too high (due to disease, stress, trauma or even age), it can signal the testes to stop producing sperm altogether.

Both men and women with out of whack FSH hormones can often find help with proper stress reduction, herbal remedies and acupuncture. Here are a few other tactics to try to improve your chances of overcoming FSH imbalances:

- Insist on a complete medical workup (not just an FSH level). Like Meghan, you could have other underlying issues affecting your fertility
• Consult an acupuncture therapists and/or herbalists to help regulate your FSH levels

• Reduce your stress levels

• Be sure to have both partners tested
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Elevated Prolactin Levels

Prolactin is a hormone that helps women to produce milk after the birth of a baby. When levels are high, ovulation is hindered; that is why many nursing mothers do not get a period while their babies are nursing at peak capacity.

Reducing estrogen levels in women and progesterone levels in men, prolactin can have a serious effect on both male and female fertility; causing a loss of ovulation in the female and a poor production of sperm in males. Some common natural remedies for elevated prolactin levels includes:

- taking vitamin B, magnesium and zinc supplements
- reducing stress
- getting enough exercise
- avoiding alcohol
- taking rebalancing hormones such as Chasteberry
- taking qi moving herbs

When it comes to dealing with any fertility problem, it is important to take as much control over your treatment as possible. Some simple ways that you can help to alleviate elevated prolactin levels include:

1. Add lots of B vitamins and zinc to your daily diet
2. Avoid alcohol (no amount is safe)
3. Begin a stress relieving regiment including exercise, massage, hypnosis, meditation, yoga, etc.
4. Take a chasteberry supplement to lower prolactin levels
5. Take qi moving herbs

6. Avoid excessive exercise (but gentle exercise is good)

**Sexual Function Problems**

When it comes to sexual function, no one wants to admit they have a problem (especially men), but the fact is that if things aren’t working right in this area, it can be very difficult to get pregnant.

There are a lot of things that can affect a man’s sexual function. Some are easier to treat than others. If a certain medication he is taking is causing erectile dysfunction, oftentimes a new prescription can be ordered, or some other aid can be offered. If a certain medical condition is causing concern, your doctor may be able to help by prescribing an erectile aid – or getting the underlying problem under better control. Some of the most common conditions that could be impeding your chances of fathering a child could include (but is not exclusive to): diabetes, multiple sclerosis, kidney disease, heart disease, stroke and even too much stress.

When sexual function is impeded by medications or disease, it can often be remedied. Harder to treat are anatomical conditions that can impair your fertility. These include:
**Hypospadias** – an unusual opening in the urethra

**Peyronie's Disease** – scar tissue causing an unusual curvature of the penis

**Complications from Surgery** – prostrate and bladder surgery can sometimes cause injury to the nerves to the penis or inhibit its blood supply.

**Injury** - some injuries to the groin can also cause permanent damage to the testes and penis, which could cause both sexual dysfunction and infertility in some men.

Some simple ways to help relieve some of your ED symptoms include:

- avoiding alcohol
- exercising
- reducing the stress at work and home
- dealing with underlying feelings of anxiety and/or depression
- stop smoking
- talk to your doctor about any medical conditions and medications you are taking that could be inhibiting your sexual function
- see an herbalist for a proper herbal treatment plan
- undergo regular acupuncture treatments
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Structural and Anatomical Issues

Hormones may be the #1 cause of infertility in both men and women, but there are a lot of structural and anatomical issues that are also impeding pregnancies among couples eager to conceive. Here are just a few of the most common physical abnormalities that keep couples from getting pregnant:

Blocked Fallopian Tubes

The fallopian tubes feature an important aspect to getting pregnant; they are the safe passageway for the egg and sperm to meet up on their way to the nurturing environment of the uterus. In about 20% of all infertile women, a blockage in the fallopian tubes is what is causing her inability to get pregnant.

Whether a blockage in the fallopian tubes keep the egg from travelling to the uterus; the sperm from getting to the egg or even a fertilized egg from getting to the womb (this is called an ectopic pregnancy), doesn’t matter; the fact is infertility ensues. When it comes to fallopian tube issues, there are four main reasons why they may become obstructed, with each needing its own course of specialized treatment:

1. Mucus that is too thick. The mucus in the fallopian tube has an important job – to push the egg forward on its journey to the uterus. Problems can
arise, however, when too much mucus is made, actually blocking the egg’s passage.

2. Infection and inflammation. The cervix can be a breeding ground for bacteria that can cause the inner walls of the fallopian tubes to swell, making them stick together. This is called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and is very common condition among women; although chronic PID can cause lasting fertility issues.

3. Excess Liquid. When the fallopian tubes become inflamed due to bacteria or microbes from the cervix, they can fill with liquid pus, which can block the narrow tubes, making it difficult for the egg to pass through. If this puss builds up enough it can also leak into the uterus where it can create a toxic environment for a growing embryo.

4. Scarring and/or Thickening. Sometimes the fallopian tubes can become thick with scar tissue resulting form chronic infection, previous c-sections or other surgery and even traumatic pelvic deliveries, which can block the passageway for both egg and sperm.

Blocked fallopian tubes can be treated with a variety of options. Laparoscopy can be very successful in clearing out mucus plugs and other blockages, as can HSG treatments. In cases where the blockages can not be removed, IVF is a good way to bypass it, allowing the doctor to surgically remove the woman’s eggs; fertilize them in a laboratory and reinserting them into the uterus for implantation.
If you are looking for a more natural way to treat a fallopian tube blockage, you can use both herbal medicine and acupuncture to increase circulation to the area and break down stagnant blood and phlegm. Some women also find deep abdominal massage helpful in treating blocked tubes. Other self-help options include:

- using castor oil packs on the stomach (especially if you suffer with scar tissues)
- stop smoking; it impedes the action of the cilia which can keep the egg from moving through the fallopian tubes properly

**Fibroids**

When you have too much estrogen in your body, benign growths called fibroids can grow inside the wall of the uterus. Fibroids can be a real fertility killer due to the fact that they can change your pelvic anatomy; alter the blood supply to the uterus and even interfere with an egg implanting after it has been fertilized. With more than 25% of all women past the age of 35 suffering with fibroids (many are unaware that they have them), it’s no wonder so many couples are finding it difficult to conceive.

When fibroids are suspected, your doctor may order a ultrasound; hysteroscopy, allowing the doctor to insert a small camera through the cervix for a better view of the uterus; HCS or laparoscopy to determine how many fibroids you have as well
as how large they are. Depending on their overall size and location, they may need to be removed in rode rot make a pregnancy possible.

Many doctors are now using herbal treatments and acupuncture in conjunction with the surgical methods described above to help treat fibroids. Be careful though when using blood-moving herbs to break down fibroids since they can also cause a miscarriage should conception take place during treatment.

Some other self-help treatments that can be used to help treat fibroids include:

- losing weight (extra fat cells in your body can produce more estrogen)
- eating a low-fat high fiber diet
- eating only organic meat and dairy
- avoiding soy products (it contains an estrogen-mimicking compound)
- eating more cruciferous veggies
- eating artichokes
- detoxifying the body to help strengthen liver function
- improving circulation through exercise
- taking Vitamin B supplements
- limiting sugar and caffeine
- avoiding processed foods
- supplementing with dandelion root, burdock, turmeric and milk thistle
- drink fresh lemon juice to stimulate the liver
- take warm baths with Epsom salts
- adding more omega-3 fatty acids to your diet
• try yoga
• avoid stressful situations (slow down your life!)

When it comes to preventing fibroids in the first place, an emphasis on reducing your exposure to too much estrogen; strengthening the liver to enable it to better excrete excess estrogen from the body and promoting better circulation in the pelvic region are all needed. This can all be accomplished by undergoing a herbal remedy designed to treat your specific issues; losing weight (fat cells increase estrogen in the body; avoiding dairy products which can be very congestive to the reproductive system; Avoid soy which contains estrogen like ingredients; eat a well-balanced diet filled with cruciferous fruits and veggies; stimulate lover function by adding some lemon juice and radishes to your diet; follow a detoxification program designed to clear the liver of excess estrogen; indulge in regular warm baths with Epsom salts and apply castor oil packs to your lower abdomen twice a day during your period (it helps the lymphatic system remove debris from the uterus).
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**Endometriosis**

One of the most common causes of infertility worldwide, endometriosis affects 10-20 percent of all women and up to 50% of women seeking fertility help. What is endometriosis? It is the growth of endometrial tissue outside of the uterus: in the fallopian tubes; the ovaries or even the pelvic wall. This extra tissue swells and often blocks fallopian tubes while creating other fertility issues within the reproductive tract. Some of the most common fertility issues associated with endometriosis include:

- Blocked fallopian tubes
- Blocked ovaries
- An increase of macrophage cells which can kill sperm and even embryos within the uterus
- Blocking the fimbrae which are connected to the ovaries and guide the egg through the fallopian tubes
- LUFS and LDP as described earlier
- The creation of a hostile environment within the uterus caused by an inflammatory reaction within the reproductive system

The cause of endometriosis is unclear, with many researchers believing that it can be enacted by high estrogen levels, a weakness in the immune system or even backed up menstruation.

The treatments for endometriosis are varied depending on its severity and the patients comfort level. Birth control pills can help relieve symptoms in women
were are not trying to conceive, but those who are must rely on laparoscopy surgery and cauterization to get rid of the excess endometrial tissues causing your fertility problems. Hormone therapy can also be helpful in some women.

More natural ways of treating endometriosis include herbs and acupuncture to try and improve blood flow to the pelvis and reduce inflammation. Evening primrose is a very helpful herb in treating inflammation and increasing circulation and blood flow, as are Omega 3 essential fatty acids. Some easy ways to improve blood flow to the pelvic region include using pads instead of tampons during your period; avoiding strenuous exercise during your bleeding time and avoiding inversions while having your period.

**Endometrial Polyps**

Endometrial polyps are growths of the lining of the uterus which can dramatically decrease your chances of getting pregnant due to the hostile environment they create and blockages that can occur. Not all polyps impede conception, but many do. The best way to check for polyps (which must be removed surgically if found) is to use a saline infusion sonogram or a Hysterosalpingogram to distend the uterine cavity and get a closer look at the size and placement of any outward growths.

When treating endometrial polyps on your own, follow these suggestions:

- lose weight (extra fat cells in your body can produce more estrogen)
- eat a low-fat high fiber diet
• eat only organic meat and dairy
• avoid soy products (it contains an estrogen-mimicking compound)
• eat more cruciferous veggies
• add some artichokes to your diet
• detoxify the body to help strengthen liver function
• improve circulation through exercise
• take Vitamin B supplements
• limit sugar and caffeine
• avoid processed foods
• supplement with dandelion root, burdock, turmeric and milk thistle
• drink fresh lemon juice to stimulate the liver
• take warm baths with Epsom salts
• add more omega-3 fatty acids to your diet
• try yoga
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Ovarian Cysts

Ovarian cysts are very common fluid-filled sacs inside the ovary. Most of these cysts go away on their own, but some need to be removed via laparoscopy. One herbal treatment not available over the counter is a mixture of herbs created by a certified herbalist including Astragals Root, Gleditsia Spine, laminaria, prunella flower, scirous, leech and Gleditsia fruit that usually dissolved most average-sized cysts in just one cycle. The best way to help yourself when dealing with ovarian cysts is to see an herbalist who can prescribe a special tonic or tincture to meet your specific needs.

Case Study

After suffering with the pain and discomfort of ovarian cysts for years, and ultimately infertility, Carol decided to take drastic measures. She scheduled a procedure to surgical remove a large cyst form her ovary. But, before the procedure a friend suggested that she see an herbalist for a more natural cure. Figuring that she had nothing to lose she did just that and took the herbal treatment described above for three weeks, discontinuing the treatment several weeks before her scheduled surgery. The day of the surgery was a big surprise when a sonogram not only showed no signs of the ovarian cyst, but a growing fetus within her womb!
**Stenotic Cervix**

Otherwise known as a closed cervix, a stenotic cervix condition can keep sperm from entering the cervix, thus preventing pregnancy. It is usually diagnosed during a pelvic exam. While there is no direct treatment for the disorder it can be circumvented by using an IVF procedure to get pregnant.

**Asherman’s Syndrome**

Any type of pelvic surgery included D & C and C-section can cause scarring within the uterine cavity that can inhibit a pregnancy in the future. Ashermans’ Syndrome is usually not detected until a vaginal saline ultrasound or Hysteroscopy is performed. The scar tissue must be removed via another surgical procedure in order to allow conception to occur.

**Problems With a Male’s Sperm**

Believe it or not, the male factor can account for as many as one-third of all infertility cases. With several sperm-related conditions to consider, it is important to learn as much as you can about what can go wrong on the man’s side of the fertility dilemma. Among the most common culprits causing male infertility are:

- low sperm counts
- improper sperm motion
• sperm malformation (whether or not they are crooked; have two heads; or otherwise damaged)

The best way to determine a sperm’s quality is to undergo a simple semen analysis. This basic test is a wonderful tool in evaluating sperm count, motility and morphology. More sophisticated testing can also check for biochemical and structural abnormalities if they are suspected.

What can cause a man’s sperm to suddenly (or not so suddenly) become unviable? There are a lot of factors that can affect a man’s sperm:

• poor diet
• environmental toxins and pollutants
• prescription drugs
• smoking
• stress
• genetics
• hormones
• and underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, kidney problems, thyroid issues, and more.

When it comes to solving a man’s sperm issues, there are a few common approaches to take. Acupuncture and herbal remedies can be the best sources for treating a number of sperm cell issues. Of course, many couples opt for using an IVF procedure in order to choose the healthiest sperm for conception, thus reducing the need for many quality sperm in a single ejaculation.
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**Varioceles**

Varioceles is a cluster of enlarged veins in the testes that accounts for 40% (or more) of all fertility problems – with these numbers being even higher among men suffering with secondary infertility (meaning that they have naturally fathered at least one child without intervention).

When varioceles occurs, blood that has clotted in the testes can heat the area to over 98.6 degrees, which is at least 1-2 degrees higher than they should be. This can cause serious damage (or even kill) sperm!

Usually only detected through a physical exam (varioceles makes the testes feel like a bag of worms), the disorder is treatable using a form of microsurgery, combined with herbal remedies to increase blood flow through the testes. Be patient though; both treatments take awhile to work. Most patients report a 1-2 year wait until a natural pregnancy occurs on its own.

**Testicular Trauma**

While we’re talking about problems with the testicles, let’s discuss trauma. Who hasn’t laughed at a comedy show here a man is blasted in the groin? It may look funny on film, but in reality, any blow to the groin can be dangerous. Testicular trauma is considered anything that compromises the blood supply to the area. This can be anything from a severe blow or certain twisting actions from exercise.
or horseplay. While keeping swelling down is very important after any injury (use ice packs and anti-inflammatory drugs), more severe cases may require surgery in order to reverse the damage.

**Blockage of the Vas Deferens**

The tube that moves the sperm from the testicle to the urethra where it is ejaculated into the cervix is called the Vas Deferens. When this small tube is blocked, sperm can not make their way to where they are needed, which can make conception impossible. There are several things that can cause a blockage of the Vas Deferens:

**Surgery:** any type of surgery in the groin (hernia repair, prostrate surgery; etc), can all cause Vas Deferens blockages.

**Congenital Absence of the Vas Deferens:** some men are born without a Vas Deferens tube on one or even both sides of the testes. Depending on the severity of the abnormality, fertility may or may not be reinstated using a surgical repair.

**Undescended Testicle:** although surgery can be used to descend the testicle, it does not guarantee full fertility function in the future.

**Infection:** any type of infection can block all or part of the Vas Deferens. The most common culprits of this disorder are: Chlamydia, gonorrhea and tuberculosis.

**Orchitis:** a viral infection can also cause the testicular to swell, both on the inside and outside. This can also block the narrow Vas Deferens tube. Mumps
are one of the most common viral infections that cause this type of infertility in men. In the most severe cases, sperm is not only cut off from this important passageway, but can be killed by the virus.
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Infections

One of the most commonly overlooked causes of infertility (in both partners) is infection. As a matter of fact, the vast majority of unexplained infertility cases can be linked back to some sort of infection, with as many as 30% being discovered upon further scrutiny.

To help increase a couple’s chance at conception during IVF many doctors are now recommending antibiotic treatment to kill off bacteria in the reproductive tract before undergoing the fertility procedure.

Keep in mind that when we talk about infections here, we are not necessarily talking about Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD’s), or their accompanying bacteria. Although some STD infections do cause fertility issues, the vast majority of fertility-related infections are irre generic in nature.

One common infection women often don’t know they have is Chlamydia, which can develop into pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). As discussed earlier, OID can scar the fallopian tubes and impede a pregnancy. Other common infections in the reproductive tract include:

- E-Coli
- Enterococcus
- Staphylococcus
• Ureaplasma
• Mycoplasma
• Candida Albicans (yeast)

Not only can these infections cause damage to female eggs, fallopian tubes, cervix and uterus, but they can also kill off sperm! Female infections can attack sperm causing them to stick together and keep them from making their way to their way to the egg. Sometimes, they attach themselves to the sperm, sucking their energy during the journey, ply to leave the sperm unable to penetrate the hard egg shell once it reaches its destination.

Bacteria in the cervix can also attach itself to the sperm in a way that allows it to reach the egg and penetrate it, only to attack the growing embryo once fertilization takes place. This can result in a miscarriage.

When found, bacterial infections need to be treated in both partners since they’ve likely transmitted the infection back and forth between themselves during intercourse.

The best course of action in relation to infections is of course preventing them in the first place. This can be done by boosting the immune system with plenty of nutritious foods and immune-building supplements. Garlic too can offer a strong antibacterial properties. Taking antibiotics and probiotics too can help rid the
system of dangerous bacteria, while strengthening the good bacteria the body needs within the intestinal tract.

**Immune System Problems**

Immunological issues can affect fertility in two ways:

1. by causing an autoimmune reaction in the body
2. by creating antisperm antibodies which attack and kill off sperm

**Autoimmune Reactions**

Autoimmune issues may account for 20% or more of infertility issues and recurrent miscarriage rates. With more and more women suffering of late with autoimmune disorders like allergies, lupus, Crohn’s Disease, Rheumatoid Arthritis and thyroid issues, it is no wonder that immune system malfunctions account for so many fertility problems.

To detect autoimmune deficiency have your doctor check these four main markers:

1. antithyroid antibiotics
2. antiphospholid antibodies
3. natural killer cells
4. antinuclear antibodies
Antithyroid Antibodies

Low thyroid levels, otherwise called Hypothyroidism, is usually caused by high levels of antibodies that attack the thyroid glands. This can keep them from working properly to release the proper se hormones at the right time, thus inhibiting pregnancy. Worse yet, these antithyroid antibodies can also induce a miscarriage if they cross-react against the placenta after conception.

Antiphospholipid Antibodies (APA’s)

When APA’s are present in the bloodstream, they attack normal cells, believing them to be nasty invaders wanting to do the body harm. When this happens they attach themselves to fat molecules of the cell membranes, creating clot. This keeps blood from flowing to the endometrium, which will ultimately keep an egg from implanting in the uterus.

One of the best treatments for APA is low dose aspirin therapy. More serious cases may require anticoagulants to thin out the blood and improve circulation to the uterus. Acupuncture can also help to improve blood flow. It can be used alone, or in conjunction with the other therapies discussed.
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Natural Killer Cells

The immune system needs the very aggressive white blood cells called natural killer cells in order to seek out and destroy dangerous bacteria and viruses that invade the body. Even cancer cells can be destroyed natural by these killer cells before they have a chance to multiply.

There job doesn’t stop there, however. Natural killer cells are also found in the uterine lining where they help to aid implantation of the fertilized egg. Problems can arise though if these natural killer cells go into overdrive and begin to attack the embryo instead of help it.

Once a blood test indicates that natural killer cells are present in abundance, then a treatment of intravenous gamma globulin, steroids or intralipid infusions are given to help suppress this dangerous immune system response.

Antinuclear Antibodies

Antinuclear Antibodies are common infections in the body that exist to attack invaders that can make you sick. The problem is, when too many Antinuclear Antibodies are present, they can cause inflammation in the uterus and keep implantation from taking place.
Should high levels of Antinuclear Antibodies exist, steroid treatment is often prescribed. While many people may think that boosting the immune system may help to keep these AA’s under control, the opposite is actually true. Instead of super-charging the immune system, the key to controlling Antinuclear Antibodies is to simply bring it back into balance. This is done by using circulation-boosting herbs; increasing your antioxidant intake; reducing stress; taking zinc supplements; and eating more alkaline producing foods like whole grains and fresh organic vegetables.

**Antisperm Antibodies**

The #1 immune system issue that affects a couple’s fertility is an allergic reaction to sperm. When anti-sperm antibodies are present in the female partner’s body, they can kill off the male partner’s sperm – stopping any chance they have at conception.

But, it isn’t always Antisperm antibodies in the woman’s body causing fertility chaos; sometimes the man’s own body can make antibodies that kill off his sperm or make them too weak to penetrate the egg.

Since antisperm antibodies can be hard to detect, checking for dead or shaking sperm in the presence of healthy cervical mucus may indicate an antisperm antibody issue. An immunobead binding test can also be performed to look for beading on the sperm after it has been mixed with blood from both partners.
Low dose steroids are usually recommended to help suppress a bad immune reaction when antisperm antibodies are present.

When it comes to dealing with immune system breakdowns on your own, here are a few helpful tips:

- meet with a Chinese medical practitioner who has experience dealing with infertility caused by immune system issues in order to devise a treatment plan that meets your specific needs
- begin a yoga and meditation exercise plan to help reduce your stress
- eat plenty of nutritious foods – especially those loaded with healing antioxidants
- stay away from refined sugar and processed foods
- eat more alkaline-based foods
- avoid alcohol
- avoid caffeine
- take a zinc supplement
- get at least 2,000 mg of folic acid every day
- try the Chinese remedy Zhi Bai (it is great at reducing antisperm antibodies)
- use acupuncture to improve blood flow to the uterus
- take a fish oil supplement daily
As you can see there, are plenty of things that can cause havoc with your fertility, making it difficult to conceive. Hopefully though, you have found that educating yourself on these common fertility issues (and their treatments) is an important first step to discovering a way to break through your own fertility problems and conceive the baby that you have always wanted. Most infertility issues can be handled quite successfully, offering hope to prospective parents. A baby is in your future – sometimes the road to parenthood just takes a few unexpected detours!
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