

## **Maximize your fertility-hormone balance**

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### Introduction

Trouble conceiving can put strain on a relationship, be the source of heartache, stress, and unexpected medical expense. Infertility is a rising problem. It is estimated that greater than 6 million couples in the U.S. have impaired fertility, that is 1/6 couples. Problems with fertility can be linked to men's hormones and sperm abnormalities, as well as female health concerns. Couples should start early to maximize their fertility by seeing a doctor and evaluating hormones, checking for systemic conditions such as hypothyroidism, and screening for exposure to environmental chemicals. Stress management is important for both men and women as stress has a negative effect on hormones and fertility.

### Factors

Many factors account for fertility problems in couples? 35-40% is due to male factor problems, 35-40% is due to female factors and 20-30% is due to a combination of male and female factors. Some problems with fertility are unexplained.

Common **female factors** include;

#### *Pelvic factors-*

Infection: pelvic inflammatory disease, STIs, endometritis

Prior Surgery: D & C, appendicitis, fibroids, endometriosis, adnexal surgery

Contraception and Pregnancy History: hormones, DES exposure, miscarriage

Menstrual Cycle Issues: metorrhagia, menorrhagia, endometriosis, pelvic pain

#### *Ovulatory factors-*

Secondary amenorrhea

Abnormal uterine bleeding

Luteal phase defect

Premature ovarian failure

Polycystic ovarian syndrome

Elevated prolactin

Hypothyroidism

Prior use of anti-estrogens (lupron, depo-provera)

#### *Systemic factors-*

Delayed childbearing

Overweight or underweight

Insulin resistance

Kidney and liver disease

Substance use (alcohol, marijuana, caffeine, tobacco)

Malabsorption (celiac, IBD)

#### *Unexplained-*

Environmental Chemicals

Common **male factors** include;

- Unexplained
- Low testosterone
- Low sperm count
- Primary hypogonadism
- Androgen insensitivity
- Cryptorchidism
- Medications
- Orchitis, including mumps orchitis
- Systemic disorder
- Thyroid disorder
- Testicular trauma/radiation
- Varicocele
- Chromosome defect
- Altered sperm transport
- Absent vas deferens or obstruction
- Epididymal absence or obstruction
- Erectile dysfunction
- Secondary hypogonadism
- Androgen excess state

### Environmental chemicals

Environmental factors account for most unexplained infertility and many of the health conditions listed above including PCOS, endometriosis and hypothyroidism. Women and men are exposed to chemicals through food, water, air, cosmetics, lotions, plastic bottles and food storage containers; just to name a few. The most common chemicals linked to fertility problems in both men and women include; *Cigarette smoke ,Pesticides, Polychlorinated biphenols (PCBs) , Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoate (PFOA) , Fish consumption and mercury , Bisphenol-A (BPA) , and Phthalates.*

Daily low-dose exposure to chemicals can build up in the body over a few days, weeks, months and years. Not only do these chemicals affect men and women's fertility but if a couple conceives, these chemicals are passed in utero to the fetus. **Studies show that low dose chemical exposure in utero is linked to Autism, ADD, hyperactivity, cognitive and behavior problems.**

### Preconceptive counseling

I suggest a couple starts preparing their body for pregnancy at least one year before beginning to conceive. Preconceptive counseling includes education on how to avoid hormone disrupting chemicals in the food, water, air, plastics, cosmetics and cleaning products. Both men and women should complete an 8-Week detoxification plan to remove chemicals from the body to balance hormones and minimize exposure to the fetus in-utero.

### Treatments

There are many naturopathic treatment options available to maximize fertility and treat both male and female factor infertility. Botanical medicine, amino acids, vitamins, minerals, and homeopathy can improve all factors of fertility. Stress management, detoxification, exercise, lifestyle changes, and nutrition should be incorporated into a plan as well. It's never too early or too late to incorporate naturopathic medicine into your life and balance your hormones.

Dr. Marchese is the author of "*8 Weeks to Women's Wellness*" Dr. Marchese graduated from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in 2002. She maintains private practice in Phoenix AZ and teaches Gynecology at Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine. Dr. Marchese was named Phoenix Magazine's Top Doctor in Naturopathic Medicine for 2014. Learn more at [www.drmarchese.com](http://www.drmarchese.com)