

Seven Tips to Optimize Your Chance of a Healthy Pregnancy

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1. Track your cycles
2. Optimize your diet
3. Decrease your exposure to environmental toxins
4. Manage your stress
5. Move your body
6. Get quality sleep
7. Get your partner on board





WELCOME

Hi! I am Dr. Marina. I am an OBGYN and have been a practicing physician for over 30 years, helping women in all phases of life. I am passionate about patient education, and I am writing a book about how to naturally optimize fertility.

In this free PDF document, I have compiled a list of tips to get you started on your journey toward achieving a healthy, successful, and natural pregnancy. For more information, please visit my website, <http://www.drmarinaobgyn.com>.

Dr. Marina

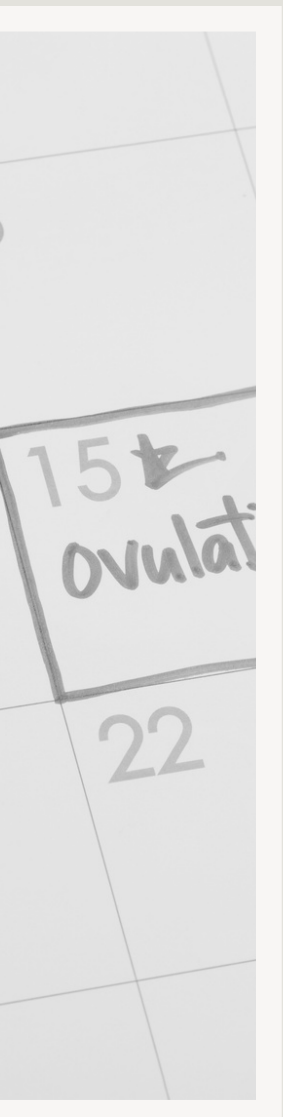
1.

Track your cycles

Awareness of your fertility window, ie. when you are most likely to get pregnant, is key to a successful pregnancy. The average menstrual cycle lasts 28 days with ovulation at day 14 (midcycle). However, each cycle may vary in length, affecting the day of ovulation. Day 1 of the cycle is the first day of bleeding, also known as menses (spotting doesn't count). The most consistent portion of the cycle is the luteal phase, which extends from midcycle to menses and usually lasts 14 days. Therefore, if your cycle is shorter by 3 days, you are likely ovulating 3 days earlier than normal - on day 11. If your cycle is longer by 3 days, you are likely ovulating 3 days later - on day 17. Other signs of ovulation include a change in the cervical mucus. You may notice that the cervical mucus is more wet and slippery a few days before ovulation - this allows it to transport sperm more easily.



If you take your basal body temperature every morning before you get out of bed, you will note that your temperature increases by about half a degree 24 hours after ovulation. You can use Ovulation Predictor Kits (OPKs), which are urine dipsticks that measure the Luteinizing Hormone (LH) rise that occurs 24 hours before ovulation. Using your menstrual data, cervical mucus appearance, temperature, and OPKs you can track your cycles to see if there is consistency in your ovulation timing. I would caution you about the use of menstrual tracking apps which may use inaccurate algorithms to predict ovulation. If your menstrual cycles are shorter than 23 days or longer than 35 days, your ovulation may be affected, and you should seek professional advice regarding your cycles. Similarly, if your periods are painful, heavy, or you bleed between your periods, medical consultation is suggested.



2

Optimize Your Diet

Food contains information that provides our bodies with instructions on how to function properly. The wrong foods can provide incorrect instructions. Studies confirm that fast food adversely affects fertility. To reproduce effectively, the body requires whole foods in correct macronutrient ratios (protein, fat, and carbohydrates). Organic produce is preferred.



The Mediterranean diet is the most studied diet regarding fertility, and it is associated with better reproductive outcomes than the standard American diet. Some suggest that women attempting to conceive require slightly more healthy fat. Supplementation with vitamins and minerals can now be considered a universal requirement, in a world where the quality of our daily diets has been severely impacted by increased food processing and poorer farming practices.



To ensure the greatest likelihood of pregnancy, prenatal vitamins should be taken for at least three months before attempting pregnancy. Most vitamins available in regular pharmacies contain synthetic forms of important vitamins, such as folate and vitamin B12. In more than 50% of the world's population, genetic variations have resulted in the inability to utilize these vitamins. Methylated B vitamins are the bioidentical forms, available in higher-quality supplements.

If you are interested in knowing what you personally need to optimize your health and pregnancy outcomes, there are several nutrigenomic tests available that can provide this information. These tests offer information on how you can personally optimize your diet and supplementation plan, guided by your genetic information.



Grow Baby 40-Marker Test

This test has been shown to decrease the risk of pregnancy-induced hypertension and gestational diabetes in pregnant women.



Nutrigenomix 70-Marker Test

This test is hypothesized to improve fertility rates. I am unaware of any studies that use this test to demonstrate improved fertility. Nevertheless, improving your overall health will certainly improve your fertility.



3.

Decrease your exposure to environmental toxins



Research has shown that men's sperm counts have decreased by over 50% in the last two generations, likely due to exposure to toxic chemicals in the environment, known as Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs). Similarly, women are increasingly suffering from hormonally driven disorders, such as endometriosis, adenomyosis, polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), fibroids, and polyps, which are impacting their fertility. These conditions are only exacerbated by EDCs found in the air, water, soil, and food.



It is impossible to avoid all of these substances, and there are some strategies that can reduce exposure significantly. One of the most commonly used pesticides in North America, glyphosate, is an EDC. As a result, health professionals strongly recommend eating organic food.

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) is a non-profit, activist organization involved in the research and awareness of environmental pollution. The group publishes a list of the “dirty dozen” types of produce, which are most likely to be contaminated with pesticides and should ideally be purchased organic, and the “clean fifteen,” which usually contain fewer pesticides and do not need to be organic. These lists can be found on the [EWG Website](#) along with various consumer databases, such as “Skin Deep,” “The Tap Water Database,” and the “Guide to Sunscreens,” which list toxicity ratings for various products.

The EWG also has a smartphone “Healthy Living App” which allows you to scan products before purchase to see their toxicity rating and to inform your purchasing decisions. The website also contains information on how to buy water and air filters for your home. I refer my patients to the EWG when beginning their journey toward eliminating environmental chemicals that affect their health and fertility.



4.

Move your body

Regular physical activity is a necessity for general health. Research has proven that a moderate to high level of physical activity is a protective factor against infertility. As little as three 30-minute sessions of vigorous activity in a week can improve the chances of conception in women with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) significantly. Men benefit from physical activity as well with improved sperm parameters. Excessive physical activity, however, is detrimental for both male and female fertility. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that healthy adults aim to get 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity weekly, 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or a combination of the two. The WHO also suggests that individuals perform muscle-strengthening activities and avoid excessive sedentary behaviours.

Manage your stress

Chronic stress is a major factor in the development of all modern diseases. Stress is also known to play an important role in fertility. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. The way we respond to stress makes a big difference to our overall well-being. Life stressors should first be identified so that we may enact avoidance strategies to minimize our stress levels. Stressors that cannot be avoided can be managed using various techniques.

The Mind-Body Fertility Program is a 10-week course devoted to alleviating the distress due to infertility. The program involves relaxation, training, cognitive restructuring, and stress management, which all result in a significant reduction in anxiety, depression, anger, and fatigue. Participation in the program has also resulted in a significantly higher pregnancy rate after one year, as compared to control subjects. Mindfulness for Fertility is another eight-week program based on the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program developed by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zind.



Mindfulness supports the cultivation of awareness. The acceptance and normalization of one's varying psychological states increases the capacity for a resilient response. Research illustrates that Mindfulness-Based Programs for infertility serve as an effective psychological intervention to combat infertility. For those who do not wish to be part of an organized program, I suggest HeartMath, which offers a smartphone app that monitors heart rate variability (HRV), measures overall health, and teaches you to improve your HRV through focused breathing.



6.

Get enough quality sleep

7 to 8 hours of quality sleep is required for general health. Studies have shown that women who receive less than 7 hours of sleep have a 15% lower chance of conceiving than women sleeping 7 to 8 hours. Sleep deprivation can impair sperm production and mobility. Obstructive sleep apnea has been associated with infertility in both men and women, as well as poor pregnancy outcomes, such as fetal growth restriction, pregnancy hypertensive disorders, and gestational diabetes mellitus. Recommendations for improving sleep quality include: establish a sleep routine with regular wake and sleep times, maintain a dark and cool bedroom, reduce screen time in the evenings, dim lights in the evening, avoid caffeine in the evenings, and do not fall asleep in front of the TV.



7.

Get your partner on board



All of these lifestyle improvements affect the health and fertility of both men and women. Enacting these changes together will double their benefits and make the lifestyle easier to maintain. Encourage your partner to join your efforts, and embark upon the fertility journey together!