

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Steven L. Smith, DC

Chiropractic Care for Fertility Problems

As a wellness-oriented provider of health care, Dr. Smith is often asked what's to blame for the rampant infertility rates. According to the British Medical Journal, "One in six couples have an unwanted delay in conception." (BMJ 2003;327:434-6.) Research indicates that women ages 35 to 39 conceive spontaneously at half the rate of women ages 19 to 26.

The mainstream media, however, overemphasizes the "age factor," while failing to address many other major contributors to infertility. The media is quick to point out that women are waiting longer to have children because they are establishing careers; the underlying message being "you waited too long; there's nothing you can do about it now but take fertility drugs or undergo fertilization procedures."

But medical fertility treatments are not without risk. They may trigger an array of physical symptoms, and new research indicates that women who undergo fertility treatments may be at a heightened risk of post-partum depression (*Hum Reprod* 2008;23:2056).

The good news is that approximately half of all couples who struggle with fertility will eventually conceive either spontaneously or by practicing relatively simple holistic options (*BMJ* 2003;327:434-6).

For instance, research indicates that chiropractic care may help correct fertility problems. Although it may not be a direct treatment for infertility, care from Dr. Smith may alleviate several risk factors.

Growing Body of Research

One study adds to a growing body of evidence indicating that chiropractic care may correct infertility (*J Vertebral Subluxation Research* 2008:1-6).

According to the new report, "a 23 year old female presented for chiropractic care to improve her overall health, in the hope that she may ultimately be able to have a child. At the time of the physical exam there was a

six week history of numbness and tingling in her left foot, and within a month the temporary bouts of numbness included both of her legs and feet."

Chiropractic examination revealed that the women's spine showed signs of a common irregularity called **vertebral subluxation**. This condition occurs when spinal movement is restricted or spinal bones (vertebrae) become slightly misaligned. Chiropractors, such as Dr. Smith, correct and prevent vertebral subluxations with a specialized and highly effective technique called **chiropractic adjustment**. A wealth of scientific research reveals that this technique, which takes years of intensive training to master, is safe and successful.

Because countless nerves enter and exit the spinal cord between vertebral bones, researchers speculate that vertebral subluxations may impede nerve flow throughout the entire body, including the reproductive system.

According to the study, "the patient had her first natural menstrual cycle 3 ½ months into care and discovered she was pregnant 4 ½ months after initiation of chiropractic care. Ultrasound confirmed the pregnancy shortly af-

ter." (*J Vertebral Subluxation Research* 2008:1-6.)

The study concludes: "Marked resolution of the patient's signs and symptoms was obtained concomitant with a reduction in subluxation findings at multiple levels. Further research is called for to evaluate the safety, cost, and effectiveness of chiropractic care in women's health."

Another study also suggests that chiropractic care may correct some cases of infertility. The report followed two women who were unable to ovulate due to Polycystic Ovary Syndrome. The women both underwent chiropractic care.

According to the report, prior to chiropractic care, both women scored a 10 out of a possible 10 on a standard assessment for menstrual irregularity. These findings demonstrated that the women were unable to ovulate. Following chiropractic care, both patients rated 0 out of 10 on the scale, indicating complete recovery (*Chiro J of Australia* 2006;36:2-8).



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In Addition to Chiropractic Care, Consider the Following:

Simply learning about her cycle may dramatically boost a woman's odds of getting pregnant. Consider reading a book on the subject, such as *Taking Charge of Your Fertility* by Toni Weschler

Obesity is a major cause of infertility in both men and women. On the other hand, being excessively underweight may also cause fertility problems.

Emotional stress is a major cause of infertility, and struggling with infertility can cause stress. Investigate stress-reduction techniques, such as meditation and Tai Chi.

A variety of **medications** are linked with fertility problems.

Stick with a **diet** focused on whole foods, low in sugar and animal fats, and high in zinc-rich foods, such as whole grains. A diet high in trans fat (partially hydrogenated fats) or interesterified (fully hydrogenated) fats may boost fertility problems.

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other **chemicals** found in plastics may trigger infertility and birth defects. Use glass containers whenever possible, especially when heating foods.

Practicing **regular meditation** may prevent infertility.

Acupuncture has been shown to boost fertility.

Smokers are 3.4 times more likely to take more than a year to conceive than nonsmokers, and in each cycle, smokers have two-thirds the chance of conceiving compared with nonsmokers.

Women who consume **full-fat dairy** products (as opposed to low-fat or fat-free products) have an easier time getting pregnant.

Hormones in meats and dairy may affect fertility. Choose an **organic** diet.

Women who consume more than 500 mg of **caffeine** per day are nearly 50 percent less likely to conceive within 9.5 months than women who do not drink caffeinated beverages.

More Research Indicates That Chiropractic May Help

Another study by Elizabeth Anderson-Peacock, DC, DICCP, highlights two case studies of women who were medically diagnosed as infertile (*J Vertebral Subluxation Research* 2003:1-6). Both women in the study were able to conceive following chiropractic intervention.

Anderson-Peacock explains that specific chiropractic adjustments may have improved the internal balance of the women's bodies and enhanced the likelihood of conception (*J Vertebral Subluxation Research* 2003:1-6).

Chiropractic Helps Mom and Dad Avoid Medications

Another way that chiropractic care may correct infertility is by providing natural pain relief, which allows patients to avoid pain medications.

It's important to note that many women who think they can't get pregnant actually do conceive but miscarry

during the early days of pregnancy. There are often no signs or symptoms of an early miscarriage, so women who experience them may never even know they were pregnant.

That's why it's imperative for infertile women to steer clear of any substances that may trigger miscarriage. Most people know to avoid prescription medication while trying to conceive, but mistakenly believe that over-the-counter medications are safe. For instance, over-the-counter painkillers known as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) dramatically increase the risk of early miscarriage, according to a report in the *British Medical Journal*.

Researchers reviewed the cases of 1,055 women in their early weeks of pregnancy. Women who took NSAIDs were 80 percent more likely to suffer a miscarriage than those who avoided these drugs. Risk was significantly higher among women who took NSAIDs close to conception or took them for more than one week. Prenatal aspirin use was similarly associated

with a bolstered risk of miscarriage (*BMJ* 2003;327:368).

A wide range of other medications and illegal drugs are linked with fertility problems. This is true not only for mom, but also for dad. For instance, marijuana use is associated with lowered sperm production.

So if you're trying to conceive, both mom and dad should carefully assess the need for medication (but do talk to your physician before discontinuing any recommended medication). Regular chiropractic checkups will help keep you pain-free without drugs.

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