

Fertile Foods: A Traditional Chinese Medicine Approach to Conception

By Dr. Jeda Boughton

In my practice as a Doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) I have observed that infertility is an increasing concern. I am often asked, "Can I boost my fertility by eating the right types of foods?"

The nutrients that circulate through your body have a profound effect on the function of your reproductive organs. However, without guidance, it can be difficult to decide what foods you should be eating to promote fertility and what foods you should avoid when trying to conceive.

Western nutrition categorizes foods according to their vitamin and mineral content. What TCM also factors in is the energetic qualities of foods and their impact on your overall balance. The goal of TCM is to create an internal environment where blood and energy flow smoothly through your reproductive organs. The role of food is to fully nourish your organs so that they can function optimally.

Lack of nourishment can manifest as light menstrual flow, and this calls for an increased intake of local, organically grown red, purple and dark green foods:

- Blackberries
- Raspberries
- Pomegranate
- Beets
- Chard
- Green / red cabbage
- Yams
- Sweet potato
- Spirulina
- Blue-green algae
- Pumpkin seeds
- Flax seeds
- Beans
- Organ meats
- Clams and oysters
- Flax / fish oils

To further improve your general reproductive health, consider adding these foods to your diet:


- Coconut
- Plums
- Shiitake mushrooms
- Peas
- Taro root
- Yams
- Rice (brown or white)
- Rye
- Almonds
- Hazelnuts
- Sunflower seeds
- Adzuki beans
- Soybeans
- Free range eggs
- Unmedicated chicken
- Wild fish

For recipe ideas and ways to integrate these foods into vegan, vegetarian and whole-food diets, visit www.mytcm.ca.

For optimum fertility, limit or avoid exposure to chemicals, heavy metals, antibiotics, hormones and the following items:

- Junk food and candy
- Processed or bleached foods
- Canned foods
- Cold food and drink
- Ice cream / frozen yogurt
- Refined / processed oils
- Large fish (Tuna and Halibut)
- Alcohol
- Coffee
- Cigarettes
- Strongly scented bath oils, incense, candles, lotions and perfumes

In addition to watching what you eat, it is also important to monitor your stress levels. One of the most common problems inhibiting conception is unmanageable levels of emotional, physical and chemical stress. Often thought to come from our external environment, stress can often manifest when you eat on the go, grab a quick snack or eat out choosing non-organic options. To support your liver and reduce stress, increase your consumption of turmeric, basil, cardamom, chives, coriander, dill, garlic, orange peel, anise and thyme.

In TCM, nutrition and lifestyle are integral for enhancing fertility, and choosing fertile foods and a healthy lifestyle is the most important thing you can do for yourself. Take time to choose your foods, prepare your own meals and eat mindfully. Keep in mind that integrating acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine with diet and lifestyle helps create balance, which in turn helps enhance fertility. 

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