

The Fertility Diet: Foods and Supplements That Support Fertility†

Proper nutrition is essential for optimal reproductive health in women, as it can influence hormonal balance, ovulation, and overall reproductive function. For women who wish to start a family, good nutrition can improve their chances of conceiving.

This article explores the relationship between women's fertility health and nutrition and provides tips on optimizing nutrition for fertility.

Fertility Diet for Women

Several factors, including genetics, environmental exposures, lifestyle, and diet, can affect a woman's fertility. A healthy diet is vital for reproductive health. Experts agree that diet quality and specific nutrients can affect female fertility by influencing weight, insulin response, inflammation, hormonal balance, and other factors.^{1,2}

Nutrients like folate, iron, and zinc are crucial for healthy egg development and maturation, while omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants can improve egg quality and protect against oxidative stress. A balanced and varied diet with a wide range of nutrients can support healthy hormonal balance, ovulation, and fertility.

Fertility Foods

A diet that supports fertility should be rich in whole, nutrient-dense foods that provide the essential nutrients for reproductive health. These foods also promote healthy weight and reduce the risk of insulin resistance, both associated with improved fertility.² Some foods that may help boost fertility include:

1. Leafy Greens - Dark leafy greens such as spinach and kale are rich in folate. This B vitamin is essential for healthy egg development and maturation.
2. Oily fish- Fatty fish like salmon, sardines, or mackerel are rich sources of omega-3 fatty acids, which can improve egg quality and protect against oxidative stress.
3. Berries – All berries (blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, etc.) are high in polyphenol antioxidants, which can protect against oxidative stress and improve overall reproductive health.
4. Beans and Legumes - Beans and legumes, like chickpeas, lentils, black, kidney, or pinto beans, are rich in iron and zinc, crucial for healthy egg development and maturation.
5. Nuts and Seeds – All nuts and seeds provide healthy, unsaturated fats, protein, and vitamins and minerals such as vitamin E and zinc, which can support reproductive health.

6. **Whole Grains** - Whole grains such as brown rice and quinoa are a rich source of complex carbohydrates, which can help regulate blood sugar levels and support healthy hormonal balance.

Foods That May Reduce Fertility

Besides consuming nutrient-dense foods, avoiding certain foods that can negatively impact fertility is also important. Some foods that should be avoided or limited include:

1. **Processed Foods.** These are often high in sugar, unhealthy fats, and other additives that can disrupt hormonal balance and negatively impact reproductive health.
2. **Caffeine and Alcohol.** High intake of caffeine and alcohol can negatively impact hormone balance and decrease fertility.
3. **Trans Fats.** These manufactured fats are often in fried and processed foods, including baked goods and fast foods. They can negatively impact fertility by increasing inflammation and disrupting hormonal balance.
4. **High-Mercury Fish** - Fish that are high in mercury, such as shark and swordfish, should be avoided, as high levels of mercury can negatively impact fertility.

Many studies suggest that a Western diet, high in processed foods, unhealthy fats, and refined carbohydrates, may impair ovulation.^{1,2} On the other hand, healthy diet patterns such as the Mediterranean diet, which is rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, fish, and olive oil, seem to improve the chances of fertilization.^{1,2} The Mediterranean diet may also increase the chances of live birth among women undergoing in-vitro fertilization.²

The Role of Vitamins and Supplements in Fertility

While a healthy diet should always be the foundation of optimal fertility, supplements can help ensure women meet their daily nutrient needs. Many healthcare providers recommend that women trying to conceive take prenatal vitamins. This can help close any gaps in the diet and boost levels of several key fertility nutrients.

Some nutrients that have been shown to be helpful for fertility include:[†]

1. **Folate.** Also known as vitamin B9 or folic acid, this vitamin is essential for healthy egg development and maturation. Adequate folate intake is especially crucial before conception and during early pregnancy, as it can prevent neural tube defects in the developing fetus.

The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology recommends that all women trying to conceive supplement with at least 400 micrograms of folic acid starting at least one month before and during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. Women at high risk of a neural tube defect may need more than this.

It's important to note that not all forms of folic acid are the same. Many people cannot metabolize regular folic acid efficiently because of a common genetic variation called MTHFR. Methylated folate is preferred because it's the biologically active form of this critical vitamin.

2. **Iron.** This mineral is crucial for healthy blood flow and oxygen delivery to the reproductive organs. Adequate iron intake can support healthy egg development and maturation and help prevent anemia common in early pregnancy.
3. **Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10).** This powerful antioxidant can improve egg quality and protect against oxidative stress. It can also improve sperm quality in men.
4. **Omega-3 Fatty Acids.** Also known as fish oil, these provide essential fatty acids for healthy hormone production and reproductive health. They can also improve sperm quality in men. Omega-3 fats also play essential roles early in pregnancy because they are involved in fetal brain, central nervous system, and eye development.
5. **Vitamin D.** Vitamin D is essential for healthy hormone production and can improve overall reproductive health. Low levels of vitamin D have been linked to infertility in women.
6. **Zinc.** This mineral is essential for healthy egg development and maturation and healthy sperm production in men. It is also vital for healthy immune function.
7. **Probiotics.** These supplements contain live, active beneficial bacteria. They support gut health, and certain species and strains of bacteria promote a balanced female vaginal ecology. When used regularly, probiotics contribute healthy bacteria and yeasts to your microbiota, supporting your immune system and a healthy inflammation response.†

It is important to note that supplements should not replace a healthy diet, but rather, they should complement it. Before starting any new supplement regimen, it is always a good idea to consult a healthcare professional to ensure the supplements are appropriate and safe for individual needs and circumstances.

Consider these supplements, specially designed to support women's health and fertility needs:†

- **[Ther-biotic® Women's Formula](#)** – This broad-spectrum probiotic helps restore and maintain a healthy, balanced microbial ecology within the female genitourinary microbiome.†
- **[Prenatal & Nursing Formula](#)** – Provides essential nutrients to support women from preconception through nursing in highly bioavailable, well-tolerated forms.†
- **[Eicosamax® 1000](#)** - 1,000 mg of omega-3 EPA and DHA from fish oil to support a balanced inflammatory response, hormone production, and your heart, joint, skin, brain, and nerve function.†
- **[Chewable Coenzyme Q10 \(CoQ10\)](#)** – This supplement offers 300 mg of highly bioavailable ubiquinone coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) in chewable wafers. This powerful antioxidant supplies energy through ATP activation to help protect cells and vital organs from free radical damage.†

The bottom line is that nutrition is vital to fertility by supporting healthy hormonal balance, ovulation, and reproductive function. All women who wish to conceive should optimize their nutrition. Eating a fertility diet focused on whole, nutrient-dense foods and taking prenatal vitamins and other supplements as needed can improve the chances of conception.†

References

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