

Using Natural Supplements to Improve Fertility

Your Healthy News – Fertility Newsletter

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Infertility occurs when couples are unable to become pregnant after one year of trying; one out of seven couples has trouble conceiving.¹ Becoming pregnant is a complex process, and in order for it to happen, many steps must occur both on the male and female side. With varying treatments and procedures available, a portion of couples decide to use natural supplements to assist with their infertility.

Role of Antioxidants in Fertility and Sperm Quality

Ample evidence exists showing that antioxidants and oxidative stress may influence the timing and maintenance of a viable pregnancy.² Oxidative stress causes DNA damage to sperm in men leading to decreased sperm count and motility and increased abnormal sperm.² In women, oxidative stress may lead to delayed conception, increased loss of implanted embryo, and decreased fertilization, implantation, and oocyte function.²

Antioxidants, such as vitamins E and C, and antioxidant cofactors, such as copper, selenium, zinc, help the body decrease the amount of oxidative stress, and provide possible avenues for which natural supplements may provide benefit to couples with infertility issues.^{2,3} Table 1 shows different doses of antioxidants and antioxidant cofactors that have been studied in couples with infertility issues.

Other Supplements to Improve Female Fertility

Several natural supplements have been used throughout the world to help with female fertility.⁴ Vitex, or chasteberry extract, has shown in multiple studies to increase pregnancy rate and decrease premenstrual symptoms and other menstrual cycle irregularities.⁴ One amino acid in particular, L-arginine, helps to improve circulation to reproductive organs.⁴ Vitamin B6, vitamin B12, folic acid, magnesium, selenium, iron, and zinc have also been shown to improve female fertility.⁴

One study looked at the administration of Fertility Blend, a product containing chasteberry, green tea, L-arginine, vitamins E, B6, B12, folate, iron, magnesium, zinc, and selenium, to female patients.⁴ It found that 5 out of 15 patients receiving this product became pregnant after 5 months of treatment compared to none of the 15 patients receiving placebo, and there were no major side effects noted with this supplement.⁴

It appears that some supplements, especially those possessing antioxidant capabilities, may help to provide benefit to patients' fertility issues, but it is important for patients to discuss with their doctors and pharmacists before beginning new supplements. Not all causes of fertility may be treated with natural supplements. Since these supplements are not regulated by the FDA like medications are, information regarding their safety and efficacy is limited. It is important to seek medical advice before initiating any new medicine or natural supplement to see how it may affect the other medications and supplements you may be taking.

Table 1: Dosages of Natural Supplements and Their Effects on Male and Female Fertility

Natural Supplement	Dose	Effect
Chastberry ⁵	20-40 mg daily	Improved female fertility
Copper ^{*2,3,6}	900-1,300 mcg daily	Improved male and female fertility
Folic Acid ^{*4,6}	400-600 mcg daily	Improved female fertility
Green Tea ^{*6}	3-10 cups daily	Improved female fertility
Iron ^{*4,6}	8 mg daily for males 18 mg daily for females	Improved female fertility
L-arginine ^{4,7}	400-6000 mg daily	Improved sperm motility and female fertility
Magnesium ^{*4,6}	600-1200 mg daily	Improved female fertility
Selenium ²⁻⁴	100-200 mcg daily	Improved female fertility and sperm motility, viability, and morphology
Vitamin B6 ^{*4,6}	1.3-1.7 daily mg for males 1.3-2 daily mg for females More if pregnant or lactating	Improved female fertility
Vitamin B12 ^{*4,6}	2.4-2.8 mcg daily	Improved female fertility
Vitamin C ²	200-1,000 mg	Improved sperm motility and concentration
Vitamin E ²	300 mg twice daily or 400 mg once daily	Improved sperm motility, viability, and morphology, concentration
Zinc ^{2,3,4,8,9}	66-500 mg daily	Improved female fertility and sperm motility, count, and fertilizing capacity

*- Doses listed are based on recommended daily allowance. Sufficient data is not available for establishing doses specific for fertility.

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