



Reproductive Partners  
Fertility Center - San Diego

*Where patients become parents*

# Fertility Treatments & Your Lifestyle

*How You Can Improve Your Fertility Through Lifestyle Choices*

*It should come as no surprise that the lifestyle you lead directly affects your fertility. From making healthy lifestyle choices to supplementing your intake of important nutrients, there are many things you can do outside of the clinic to improve and maintain your chances of becoming pregnant.*

*Whether you are in the beginning stages of family planning or are currently seeking assistance from a fertility clinic, simple lifestyle adjustments and extra daily supplements can promote fertility. In this guide, we discuss lifestyle recommendations for those beginning the fertility treatment process.*





## Lifestyle Modifications for Improved Fertility

There are several important changes you and your partner can make before and during fertility treatments to increase the chance of successful conception. We recommend making these lifestyle modifications if you are considering becoming pregnant.



## ALCOHOL

**Avoid excessive alcohol use.** Excessive alcohol has been shown to cause birth defects in fetuses. In addition, patients who drink have a decrease in fertility rates, particularly with IVF. Miscarriage rates have been shown to double when 2 or more alcoholic drinks per day are consumed.

## SMOKING

**Stop smoking and stay away from anyone who is smoking.** Smoking has been implicated in infertility and earlier menopause. Smoking reduces success with IVF by about 50% and second hand smoke has similar effects.

## DRUGS AND MEDICATIONS

**Stop recreational drugs and unnecessary medications.** Please stop all medically unnecessary drugs prior to attempting pregnancy. If you are taking medications prescribed by another physician, please let us know so we can determine if the medications are safe to take when trying to conceive and during pregnancy. This goes for your partner as well. Recreational drugs such as marijuana are never a good idea, especially when you are trying to conceive.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND WEIGHT LOSS

**Increase physical activity and lose weight if necessary.** If you are overweight, it is a good idea to lose weight before trying to conceive. We encourage you to be physically active and to get your body into the best shape you can. In one study, obese women who exercised regularly had a three times higher chance of success with IVF. Women who are not obese should avoid strenuous exercise. Any level appears to be helpful for obese women.







## Exercise for Enhancing Fertility

A healthy lifestyle where exercise is routine aids in successful conception in both men and women (Vaamonte, 2012 & Wise, 2012). Choose a moderate and consistent exercise routine that you can stick with. Since strenuous exercise can have a negative impact on achieving a successful pregnancy for the female, pausing that Cross-fit membership and suspending marathon training in lieu of more moderate aerobic activities is advisable. Exercise enough to raise your heart rate, which decreases oxidative stress and increases blood flow without fully taxing your body.




**Here is a list of suggested exercises for prior to and during fertility treatments:**

- **Walking** – Brisk, 30-minute walks 5-6 times per week burn calories and increase blood flow without stressing the body too harshly.
- **Yoga & Tai Chi** – Though this may look easy, maintaining poses and using often-overlooked muscle groups will get your heart pumping and cause you to break a sweat.
- **Swimming** – This whole body workout strengthens your core without placing too much stress on your joints. Keep an eye on your pace; your goal should be to maintain a comfortable rhythm for at least 20 minutes that leaves you feeling invigorated, not gasping for breath.
- **Dance** – Dance is a fun and creative way to mix up your exercise routine. Stick to gentle styles like ballet or ballroom dancing in place of high-impact alternatives, like hip-hop or Zumba.
- **Other Light Cardio** – Light elliptical workouts, easy bicycling, or slow jogging are all great ways to get your heart pumping. But keep your resistance and speed moderate; a good pace is one where you can still hold a full conversation during your workout.

An exception to the gentle exercise rule is for women with a BMI over 30. Such an elevated BMI, in and of itself, has more negative effects on fertility than those caused by strenuous exercise. In those situations, fertility experts advise engaging in a challenging routine to lower body weight FIRST, prior to seeking fertility treatment and then adopting a more moderate exercise regimen, although studies have not shown a negative effect of strenuous exercise on obese women trying to conceive.

Be sure to always discuss any exercise routines with your physician. Every patient is different and their needs are individual.



A woman with long brown hair tied in a ponytail, wearing a teal long-sleeved shirt and a light-colored apron, is smiling and focused on chopping vegetables on a wooden cutting board. She is standing in a kitchen with dark cabinetry and a stainless steel sink. Various kitchen items, including a toaster and a glass of orange juice, are visible in the background.

## Foods that Boost Fertility

Changing your diet can increase your fertility and can positively affect your chances of becoming pregnant. Here are several foods you can add or remove from your diet that can impact your overall chances of becoming pregnant.

## THINGS TO EAT AND THINGS TO AVOID

We recommend reducing red meat intake, eliminating trans fats (such as donuts, pastries and all fried foods), and ensuring that at least 50% of every meal is comprised of fruits and vegetables. Use olive oil for bread, dressings and cooking. It's high in monounsaturated fat, which may be beneficial for women undergoing IVF treatment, and is good for general health. Reducing sugar intake is always a good idea. Overcooking of foods should be avoided.

Many delicious foods are high in antioxidants and should be incorporated into your regular diet.

### Here are some other popular foods that have a naturally high antioxidant content:

- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Strawberries
- Pomegranates
- Cranberries
- Raspberries
- Dark chocolate (low sugar)
- Artichokes (cooked)
- Spices (ex. ginger, oregano, turmeric, cumin)

## GREEN TEA

Drinking daily green tea also increases antioxidant intake, however we do not recommend over one cup of decaffeinated green tea per day because the caffeine could interfere with fertility. Green tea is minimally processed, which maintains its healthful properties. Though the decaffeination process does reduce the antioxidant content, simply adding 50mg of liquid Vitamin C to each cup of decaffeinated green tea can significantly increase your antioxidant intake.

## CAFFEINE

Excessive consumption of caffeinated products by the female, such as coffee, tea, colas, and chocolate may decrease fertility, although studies are conflicting. To be cautious, limit intake to a minimum. Caffeine is not harmful for the male partner's fertility.





## Lifestyle Supplements

While the causes of infertility vary, research shows that the health and viability of the egg, its surrounding cells and the resulting embryo are impacted by the blood flow to these cells as well as the amount of antioxidant that protects them from damaging effects of oxidation. In short, the healthier the environment surrounding these cells, the better.



## SUPPLEMENTS

Other nutritional supplements have antioxidant properties and increase blood flow, helping to cultivate healthy conditions for eggs and embryos. Prenatal vitamin manufacturers produce single pills that contain the supplements listed below. However, the cost will be lower if prenatal vitamins and omega 3's are taken separately.

### OMEGA 3 FATTY ACIDS

These healthy essential fats help maximize blood flow to your pelvic organs by increasing nitric oxide production by your blood vessels. Higher intake of Omega-3's may improve success in embryo implantation, decrease premature labor and have positive effects on fetal brain development, but more research is needed.

**We recommend 500 to 1000 mg of EPA/DHA per day as a supplement (fish oil) on days you are not eating the Omega-3-rich foods listed below. Be sure to look at the nutritional label on the back. We are referring to the total intake of EPA/DHA, not the amount of oil commonly listed on the front of the bottle. For men with reduced sperm quality, 1800 mg per day over about 6 months produced remarkable improvements in sperm numbers and quality.**

- Salmon
- Sardines
- Herring

### FOLIC ACID

Folic acid is found naturally in dark, leafy greens (i.e., spinach), broccoli, avocado, and fortified cereals. Prenatal vitamins usually contain 400-800 micrograms per day to reduce the risk of a small, but very important, group of fetal abnormalities (neural tube defects). If you're already taking prenatal vitamins, you should not need additional folic acid supplements.





## VITAMIN C

A vitamin C supplement of 500 to 1,000 mg daily improves antioxidant levels and also nitric oxide production, thereby improving blood flow. Since vitamin C can worsen heartburn, we recommend to avoid taking it right before bedtime.

## L-ARGININE

L-arginine is the raw material for nitric oxide production, which improves blood flow. We suggest a 1000 to 2000 mg daily dose for women whose protein intake is low (for example vegetarians/vegans).

## PYCNOGENOL

If your daily intake of natural antioxidants is low, we recommend 50 to 120mg of this plant-derived supplement containing antioxidants similar to those in berries. Antioxidants may be particularly important for women over age 37.

## COENZYME Q-10

This mitochondrial nutrient naturally occurs within your body, decreases with age and is critical to a cell's energy production. A dose of 600 mg per day is commonly recommended for women over age 37. Although there is limited information about benefits in humans, in older mice, coenzyme Q-10 has been shown to reverse most effects of aging on the egg. Most likely at least 3 months is optimal to have the desired effect.

**For those taking pycnogenol or CoQ10, we advise stopping with a positive pregnancy test.**



## Lifestyle Choices & Your Fertility

While there is no single food or magic pill that can guarantee pregnancy or embryo implantation, understanding how antioxidant supplements, exercise, diet choices and supplements may impact your fertility can help you make decisions that give you the best chance of success. If you are currently undergoing IVF treatment or other treatments for infertility you can get information from your doctor and your fertility center team. Detailed information and links to the pertinent studies can be accessed at [www.lifechoicesandfertility.com](http://www.lifechoicesandfertility.com).





## Reproductive Partners Fertility Center

The journey to becoming parents can be one filled with challenges, hope and, ultimately, endless joy. Our goal at Reproductive Partners Fertility Center –San Diego (RPSD) is to accompany you on your journey with world-class medical treatment, care and compassion. Call us today to schedule your initial consultation.





## Schedule an Initial Consultation

The first step on your journey to building your family is your initial consultation. During your first visit, you will meet with one of our physicians who will explain the process, perform an examination and discuss your personalized treatment options.

9850 Genesee Ave.  
Suite #800  
La Jolla, CA 92037

Monday-Friday: 8am - 4:30pm  
Saturday & Sunday: 8am - 12pm

858.552.9177 *phone*  
858.552.9188 *fax*

[info@FertilityClinicSanDiego.com](mailto:info@FertilityClinicSanDiego.com)  
[www.FertilityClinicSanDiego.com](http://www.FertilityClinicSanDiego.com)