

10 Steps to Improving Fertility

Results from 18,555 women who participated in fertility subgroup of the Nurses Health Study.
From *The Fertility Diet*

1. Avoid trans fats

- Trans fats are manmade fats that the body has a difficult time processing. Once approved for use in food it was used in a variety of processed foods and frying oils. Now the government has reversed it's position that trans fat is "safe" additive and food manufacturers can't get it out of production fast enough due to it's detrimental health effects.
- Trans fat is listed on the food facts label. However, looking at the number is not enough. Small amounts can sneak into food and be listed as "0" grams on the label. Look at the ingredients. Avoid oils that begin with "**partially hydrogenated**" which indicates a trans fat.

2. Choose Unsaturated fats

- Unsaturated fats are found in oils that are LIQUID AT ROOM TEMPERATURE. For example, olive oil canola oil, fish oil, or natural peanut butter.
- Other food sources of unsaturated fat are cold water fish, almonds, peanuts, avocado, walnuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, ground flaxseed, nut butters or cashews.
- All fats are high in calories so only a small portion is needed daily.

3. Eat more vegetable protein / less animal meat

- Replace meat at some meals with beans, hummus, eggs (it's ok to eat the yolk), low mercury containing fish, lentils, quinoa or nuts.
- Quinoa is a high protein grain that can easily be substituted for rice.
- Try legume (bean) pasta such as Barilla Protein pasta, Tolerant or Banza pastas
- Choose lentil soup, black bean soup, refried beans or a black bean burger when available.

4. Choose whole grains

- Whole grains contain fiber. Fiber slows the digestion of carbohydrates and helps your body respond better to glucose and insulin.
- Fiber binds sex hormone byproducts in the stool to prevent reabsorption
- Fiber will keep you fuller longer which is a bonus if you are trying to lose weight
- Choose oats, quinoa, brown rice, whole wheat or bean pasta, barley, popcorn or whole grain breads

5. If you consume dairy have a serving of full fat daily daily

- Consider full fat Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, milk or a small scoop of ice cream
- Choose organic when possible

6. Take a multiple vitamin

- “studies suggest that *something* in a multiple vitamin enhances ovulation and survival ability of embryos.” - The Fertility Diet pg. 126. “something” may be folic acid and non-heme iron.
- Choose a women’s formula that also contains iron. Avoid kids formulas, gummies and chewables as they do not contain adequate minerals such as iron.
- Folic acid needs almost double for women trying to conceive

7. Get plenty of iron from vegetables, beans and supplements, but not red meat

- Iron from plant foods is called non-heme iron and can easily be excreted if your body already has adequate iron
- Iron from red meat is called heme iron and is not excreted if your body already has adequate iron. Excess heme iron is stockpiled and these stores can cause cell damage including potential damage to eggs and cells surrounding them.

8. Stay away from liquid calories choose more water

- Ditch juice (even 100%), soda, high calorie coffee beverages, sweet teas and sports drinks.
- The sugar sends a surge of glucose into your blood and your body has to manage it by increasing insulin production. Elevated insulin, over time, impacts ovulation and fertility, even in the absence of a diabetes diagnosis.
- Choose water, calorie-free carbonated waters, unsweetened teas, or black coffee (1/day)

9. Aim for a healthy weight

- Set a small goal. You don’t have to be at your ideal goal weight to reap the fertility benefits of weight loss.
- Excess weight can interrupt menstrual cycles, throw off/stop ovulation, lower the odds that procedures to assist with pregnancy will succeed, increases the chances of miscarriage, and once pregnant, increases the risk of high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, and c-section delivery.

10. Start a daily exercise routine

- Aim for at least 30 minutes per day. Do both cardio and strength training activities
- For weight loss, aim for 60 minutes per day. Can’t do 60 minutes at once? No problem, it can be broken up into smaller bouts throughout the day.

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