

Every woman should read this book written by John R. Lee, M.D.

In **"What your doctor may not tell you about premenopause"**. He wrote..

"If you're a woman between the ages of thirty and fifty, you know a woman, maybe yourself, who has fibroids, tender or lumpy breasts, endometriosis, premenstrual syndrome or PMS, difficulty conceiving or carrying a pregnancy to term, sudden weight gain, fatigue, irritability and depression, foggy thinking, memory loss, migraine headaches, very heavy or light periods, bleeding between periods or cold hands and feet. These symptoms are part of premenopause for a majority of today's women, and are the result of hormone imbalances, most of them caused by an excess of the hormone estrogen (estrogen dominance) and a deficiency of the hormone progesterone. Natural progesterone is essential for maintaining hormone balance, and yet it has been largely overlooked by conventional medicine because of medical politics and pharmaceutical company profits..Synthetic estrogen commonly prescribed for this syndrome is a wrong approach. Estrogen dominance is the cause of hormone-related cancers - cancer of breast, cancer of uterus and cancer of ovary. Progesterone is the protector against all these cancers. In spite of what a conventional doctor will tell you, you can do something about these symptoms besides antidepressant drugs, synthetic hormones and surgery."

- Take an optimal synergistically balanced multiple vitamin, mineral and antioxidants
- [Natural Progesterone Cream](#): Correct estrogen dominance with natural progesterone cream. (not synthetic progestin such as Provera). If you have chronic fibrocystic breast disease or fibroid or endometriosis or PMS, apply natural progesterone cream for 3-6 months and you will be surprised that your problem will greatly improve or even cured. A good natural progesterone cream should contain more than 450 mg of progesterone per oz.
- Drink plenty of clean water.
- Eat a plant-based, low fat, fiber-rich diet of fresh, organic vegetables and fruits, nuts, seeds, whole grains, legumes and soy. Eat organic meat only.
- Eat fish at least twice a week.
- Switch from coffee to green tea.
- Limit alcohol consumption to one drink with dinner.
- Get some exercise and meditate daily.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Avoid chronic stress. Avoid unopposed estrogen, synthetic estrogen and birth control pills. Avoid sugar, refined carbohydrates, rancid unsaturated oils and hydrogenated oils. Avoid pesticides of all kinds.
- Avoid feed-lot meats.

## DIET FOR MOM To BE

### Make healthy changes in your diet three months to a year before you conceive.

The sooner you can, the more likely you are to get pregnant. For both men and women, [foods and fertility](#) are linked; you both need to stick to a balanced diet to boost your chances of conceiving and of having a healthy baby. Read on for specific advice for you; click here for nutrition tips for a [healthy dad-to-be](#).

### Cut back now on artificial sweeteners, caffeine, and alcohol.

If your eating habits leave something to be desired — and many people's do — you'll have to make some adjustments. Some solid advice: Cut down on the artificial sweeteners, wean yourself from [caffeine](#) in chocolate, cocoa, soda, and coffee (more than 300 milligrams of caffeine per day may reduce fertility by 27 percent), and cut out or only occasionally drink alcohol (for non-alcoholic alternatives, see our list of [the best virgin drinks](#)). Stop using recreational drugs and if you smoke, quit. All these substances and habits can harm your soon-to-be-conceived baby.

### Take a vitamin-mineral supplement.

While you can meet almost all your nutritional needs through a balanced diet, some experts believe that even the healthiest eaters can use some extra help. "My doctor suggested I take a supplement while trying to conceive, and I figured it couldn't hurt," says Margaret Phillips of San Francisco. "I don't always have time to plan meals and I sometimes eat on the run. This way, I'm making sure I get everything my body needs."

Remember that a [supplement](#) is a safeguard, not a substitute for a sound diet. And since over-the-counter supplements may contain [megadoses of vitamins](#) and minerals that could be harmful to a developing baby, it's smart to switch to a pill formulated for pregnant women even before you conceive. Talk with your caregiver about the right prenatal supplement for you.

### Get lots of folic acid -- at least 400 micrograms a day.

Everyone could use more [folic acid](#), not just women--this B vitamin has been linked to a lower incidence of heart attacks, strokes, cancer, and diabetes. It also reduces a baby's risk of neural tube birth defects such as [spina bifida](#) \*.

During their childbearing years, women should get 400 micrograms (mcg) (0.4 milligrams) daily, and up to 800 mcgs if they are planning to conceive. You'll need 600 mcg once you're expecting, according to the Institute of Medicine, although some doctors advise women get 800 mcg. daily.

A good over-the-counter prenatal vitamin should contain 800 mcg of folic acid; in addition, you can eat folate-rich foods, such as dark green leafy vegetables (such as spinach or kale), citrus fruits, nuts, legumes, whole grains, and fortified breads and cereals.

### Find your ideal body weight.

Shedding some pounds (or gaining a few if you're underweight) while you're attempting to get pregnant is fine, since you want to be as close as possible to your recommended weight when you conceive. Click here for the [weight gain or loss calculator](#) to help you figure out where you stand.

Then devise a smart eating plan. Choose lower fat, higher fiber foods. Start or increase an exercise routine, and aim to lose one to two pounds a week, a safe rate of weight loss. Extreme weight loss from crash dieting can deplete your body's nutritional stores, which isn't a good way to start a pregnancy.

## DIET FOR DAD TO BE

### **My partner and I are trying to conceive. As a future dad, how important is my diet?**

Extremely important, since nutrition has a direct impact on the potency of your sperm. Research shows that poor eating habits and drinking alcohol regularly, for instance, can lower the quality and quantity of sperm, making conception more difficult. And since infertility is nearly as much a man's issue as a woman's — 40 percent of [infertility problems](#) can be traced to men — eating healthy now will boost your chances of conceiving a child. You can rekindle your love affair with cheese dogs after your pregnancy is confirmed.

Conception isn't the only reason to revamp your diet. Additional research shows that dads who drink heavily — the equivalent of two drinks a day — during the month prior to conception have babies who weigh on average 6.5 ounces less than other babies. Low birth weight is a serious medical condition that can affect your child's health and behavior for the rest of his life.

What's a healthy diet for dads-to-be? Generally, it should be every bit as balanced, varied, and nutritious as [a mom-to-be's diet during conception](#). Specifically, future dads should:

- Eat plenty of foods rich in [vitamin C](#), which cuts the risk of damaged sperm. An eight-ounce glass of orange juice contains 124 milligrams. Aim for at least 60 mg of vitamin C daily, more — at least 100 mg — if you smoke. (And if you do smoke, quit. See below for reasons why.)
- Get more [zinc](#) in your diet, at least 12 to 15 mg a day. Several studies show that even short-term zinc deficiencies can reduce semen volume and testosterone levels. Great sources include extra-lean ground beef (a three-ounce serving has 4.5 mg), baked beans (a one-cup serving has 3.55 mg), and dark chicken meat (2.38 mg per three ounces).
- Increase your intake of [calcium](#) and [vitamin D](#). Infertility researchers at the University of Wisconsin at Madison suggest that consuming 1,000 mg of calcium and 10 micrograms of vitamin D each day may improve men's fertility. Good sources of calcium include low-fat milk (an eight-ounce glass has 414 mg) and yogurt (one cup has 302 mg of calcium). You'll find vitamin D in milk (an eight-ounce glass has two mcg) and salmon (a three-ounce serving has eight mcg).
- Cut out or cut back on alcohol. While an occasional drink is generally considered safe, studies show that daily consumption of wine, beer, or hard liquor can decrease testosterone levels and sperm counts, and increase the number of abnormal sperm in your ejaculate.
- Go cold turkey on recreational drugs, such as marijuana and cocaine, which can affect the brain chemistry responsible for releasing reproductive hormones. A father's drug use can also cause birth defects.

(Find out more about how [certain foods affect fertility](#).)

### **Besides food, what other factors should I be aware of?**

A host of lifestyle factors can be perilous to your potency. The good news is, once you become aware of these often hidden fertility drainers, they are fairly easy to avoid. Here's a sampling of the worst offenders:

• **Hot tubs, saunas, and tight-fitting clothes.** Testicles function best when they keep their cool. "The boys" are happiest at 94 to 96 degrees, which is a couple of degrees cooler than normal body temperature. Steamy spa equipment, snug jeans, synthetic shorts, and bikini underwear can all overheat your testicles and inhibit sperm production. To protect your swimmers, wear loose fitting pants and boxer shorts (the truth is, they look better, too).

• **Bicycle seats.** Impotence can be an unexpected and frightening side effect of avid cycling. A study from the University of Southern California School of Medicine found that a [bicycle seat's](#) steady pressure on the groin area can damage arteries and nerves. To avoid this problem, periodically lift yourself off the seat when riding long distances. See a doctor if you feel any numbness or pain, or have erection problems after biking.

• **Rough sports such as football, hockey, soccer, basketball, baseball, horseback riding, and even sex (hoo boy).** The danger here is traumatic injury to the genitals, which can hurt your ability to produce sperm or ejaculate. If you do play contact sports (the ones that require clothes, anyway), wear protective gear. When you're training for the bedroom Olympics, just remember: Gentle is best when your goal is a baby.

• **Stress.** Studies from the Department of Physiology at the Medical College of Ohio show that even minimal stress can cause a man's testosterone levels and sperm count to drop. Chilling out can power up your potency.

• **Workplace hazards.** Exposure to radiation and chemicals can damage sperm, lower sperm counts, and cause genetic defects in children, according to research from McGill University in Montreal. If you're exposed to any hazards on the job, ask for a temporary reassignment.

• **Certain medications.** Ask your doctor about the sexual side effects of any prescription drugs you are taking. Many medications, including those used to treat blood pressure, ulcers, cancer, seizures, colitis, irritable bowel syndrome, and even bacterial infections can cause fertility problems and lower sperm counts.

• **Stop smoking.** Do you need one more reason? Well consider this: Recent research confirms that men who smoke have fewer sperm in their ejaculate. Plus, kicking the habit now can help your family out later. Second-hand smoke is dangerous for your partner and your unborn child.

The bottom line is, if you commit yourself to a few months of clean living, healthy eating — that means plenty of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean meats — and a safe (though admittedly tamer) lifestyle, you'll be in top shape to father a child.

## Herbs for Fertility

Many ONNA members have used herbs to improve their fertility. Herbs can help in such areas as regulating the menstrual cycle and helping the body produce more natural progesterone after ovulation. The following has been compiled over time by many ONNA members, but it should not replace the advice of an herbalist or other knowledgeable practitioner. Herbs, like any other form of medication, are drugs and should be used with caution.

### Herb "Recipe" for Fertility

The following are some of the herbs best known for regulating the female cycle. Since we are all different it is impossible to write a one-fits-all herb recipe. Each herb has a specific function, and what helps one may harm another. This list is intended as preliminary information to help you as you begin to investigate herbal remedies. Please do not begin taking herbs until you have read quite a bit about them, and then take only those that are best suited to your individual needs, or better yet, consult a Naturopathic Doctor. Amounts have been intentionally removed from this list. Only a doctor's prescription or some in-depth research can tell you how much of which herb is right for you.

Day 1 (first day of bleeding) - Day 5 of cycle



No herbs, gives body a chance to naturally use herbs that have already been taken, and gives your body a break from herbs.

Day 6 until Ovulation

Dong Quai (hormone regulator, blood thinner)  
Red Raspberry Leaf (uterine tonic, hormone regulator)  
Vitex (Chasteberry) (uterine tonic, hormone regulator)  
Female Harmony (women's multi-herb formula, all around supplement)

Ovulation - End of cycle/first day of bleeding

Vitex (Chasteberry)  
Female Harmony (women's multi-herb formula)  
Wild Yam (promotes production of progesterone in second half of the cycle. Also known as a contraceptive. Should not be taken before ovulation, as it may delay or prevent ovulation.)

## More Information on Specific Herbs

### Chaste Tree Berry (Chasteberry, Vitex)

Chasteberry has the effect of stimulating and normalizing pituitary gland functions, especially its progesterone function. It may be called an amphoteric remedy, as it can produce apparently opposite effects though in truth it is simply normalizing. It has for instance a reputation as both an aphrodisiac and as an anaphrodisiac! It will usually enable what is appropriate to occur. The greatest use of Chasteberry lies in normalizing the activity of female sex hormones and it is thus indicated for dysmenorrhoea, premenstrual stress and other disorders related to hormone function. It is especially beneficial during menopausal changes. In a similar way it may be used to aid the body to regain a natural balance after the use of the birth control pill. Because it is not recommended for pregnancy, many women stop taking it when they ovulate. However, because it can increase progesterone and extend the luteal phase, some women begin taking it when they ovulate. It may suppress ovulation in some women.

### Dong Quai

Dong Quai (*Angelica sinensis* root) is the noted Chinese herb that is used as a blood tonic. It contains micronutrients known for their blood building properties (iron, vitamin B12, and vitamin E). Dong Quai balances estrogen in the body, and is traditionally used in China to regulate the menstrual cycle. Dong Quai is also a blood thinner, and for this reason it should not be taken during menstruation. It may be helpful in improving the chances of implantation for women who have auto-immune problems, but should not be taken if you are already taking "baby" aspirin to reduce blood clotting.

### Evening Primrose Oil

A fatty acid that helps to increase thyroid function in women who are mildly hypothyroid. Hypothyroidism can cause anovulation and miscarriage. It is also used to improve cervical mucus and increase estrogen. Most ONNAs take 1000mg per day although you may want to start with up to 3,000 mg per day to build up your body's store. The jury is still out on when to take EPO. Many ONNAs take it all the time, the most appropriate choice for treatment of hypothyroidism. But because it may thin the uterine lining, making implantation more difficult, many ONNAs take it only prior to ovulation.

### False Unicorn Root

Used for amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, endometriosis, hormonal imbalance (balancing effect), infertility, morning sickness, ovarian cysts, spermatorrhea, threatened miscarriage, uterine prolapse. It is a tonic for the reproductive organs, especially beneficial as an aid to getting pregnant and staying pregnant, has a normalizing effect upon the ovaries. Used in infertility caused by dysfunction in follicular formation in the ovary. Eases ovarian pain and vaginal dryness. Some specialists warn not to take this herb unless you want to get pregnant!

Follow directions: Taking too much may cause hot flashes, kidney and stomach irritation, blurred vision or vomiting.

### Female Harmony

A women's multi-herb formula created by Dr. Linda Rector-Page. If you can't find this line of products in your health store, you might find another brand name of a women's multi-herb formula or you can request a free copy of Dr. Rector-Page's catalog from [her web site](#). "I don't sell this stuff - I just stumbled across it in a health store, the nutritionist on staff said that many women tend to like this line of products, so I tried it - AND I LOVE THEM! I

don't normally ovulate on my own until day 20-23 - last cycle I ovulated on day 17!!! I really think the herbs had an influence on me."

#### Red Raspberry Leaf

Raspberry leaf has a long tradition of use in late pregnancy to strengthen and tone the tissue of the uterus, assisting contractions and checking any hemorrhage during labor. As an astringent it may be used in a wide range of cases, including diarrhea, leukorrhoea and other loose conditions. It is valuable in the easing of mouth problems such as mouth ulcers, bleeding gums and inflammations. As a gargle it will help sore throats. Raspberry is also very rich in iron and calcium.

"As for the Red Raspberry leaf tea, it is not recommended until after the third month and then it is only a cup a day. It is a uterine toner and works on the smooth muscle of the uterus so in early pregnancy it can cause bleeding. I have both read this in my reference books and seen it discussed on alt.folklore.herbs. It is not until your third trimester that you can take up to 3 cups a day. It is not something I would ever recommend before the third month of pregnancy, but that is just me, I would rather be cautious than foolish."

#### Wild Yam

Wild Yam can increase progesterone production. This can increase progesterone production for those with short luteal phases but should only be taken AFTER ovulation. If taken before it can actually prevent ovulation.

### **Herbs to Avoid During Pregnancy**

Various sources have recommended avoiding the following herbs during pregnancy. These herbs should also be avoided after ovulation, in case you may be pregnant.

Barberry

Calamus

Cayenne

Cypress

Fennel

Goldenseal

Lavender

Male Fem

Mistletoe

Pennyroyal (a strong uterine stimulant!!!)

Poke Root

Sage

Tansy

Wild Cherry

Yarrow

Bloodroot

Cascara Sagrada

Celandine

Ephedra

Flaxseed

Juniper

Licorice Root

Mayapple

Passion Flower

Periwinkle

Rhubarb

St. John's Wort

Thyme

Wormwood



## *What You Can Do*

### **Do not take anti-inflammatories**

Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, etc.), Naproxen (Aleve), aspirin and similar painkilling medications can cause ovulation problems. Specifically, the use of these medications can cause luteinizing unruptured follicle syndrome (LUF or LUFS), a failure of the follicles to burst and release eggs. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) will not cause this problem and is recommended for pain relief while trying to conceive.

### **Limit your alcohol intake**

Tina Kold Jensen, a fertility researcher at National University Hospital, studied 430 couples between the ages of 20 and 35 who were trying to conceive. Those women who had one to five drinks a week were 33% less likely to get pregnant than those who did not drink. The women who had more than five drinks a week were 50% less likely to succeed. Unfair as it seems, men could drink two-fisted without worsening the odds. No one knows why, but a Harvard study has linked moderate drinking to irregular ovulation.

### **Robitussin**

The expectorant guaifensin can be taken to increase cervical fluid and improve the eggwhite consistency. ***Guaifensin*** is found in the cough syrup Robitussin (or generic alternatives) and can be taken on days when more cervical fluid is required. Suggested dosage (by ONNA members) is 1-2 tsp per day, beginning three to four days prior to when you want to conceive. Do *not* take Robitussin with decongestant.

### **Folic Acid**

A folic acid deficiency may contribute to your difficulty conceiving. During pregnancy, the body requires 8 times more folic acid than usual. Symptoms of a folic acid deficiency include fatigue and weakness, paleness, sore red tongue, and shortness of breath. Smoking or taking oral contraceptives increase your risk of folic acid deficiency. If you have symptoms of folic acid deficiency, ask your physician to check your blood for indications of low folic acid (large red blood cells and low folate levels in serum and in red blood cells). A folic acid supplement of *no more than 5 mg* (or a prenatal vitamin) can increase your chances of conceiving, and also reduces the risk of certain birth defects in your child.

### **Vitamin B6**

Supplementation with vitamin B6 may help to increase your levels of progesterone, one of the major female reproductive hormones. Recommendation: take 50 to 150mg of vitamin B6 daily for 6 months to assess your response. If you supplement above the 150mg dose you should only do so under the direct supervision of your personal physician. And even at lower doses, if you should develop numbness, tingling, pins and needles sensations or painful sensations in your hands or arms, feet or legs you should immediately stop the vitamin. (From *The Doctor's Complete Guide to Vitamins and Minerals* - Mary Dan Eades, MD)

### **Iron**

An iron deficiency (anemia) may contribute to your difficulty in conceiving. Anemia is common in menstruating women, because a great deal of iron is lost during the blood flow. Symptoms of anemia are fatigue, paleness (especially in the hands or the rim of the lower eyelid), breathlessness, rapid heart beat, and abdominal discomfort. All menstruating women should make sure to get a healthy amount of iron in their

diets or through dietary supplements. NOTE: You should not take major iron supplements unless a blood test shows an iron deficiency. Too much iron can be very dangerous. If you suspect an iron deficiency, please consult your doctor.

**Reduce your caffeine intake**

Caffeine in large amounts has been shown to inhibit ovulation. If you ovulate infrequently or not at all, it is a good idea to limit your intake to the equivalent of one cup of coffee a day, or eliminate your caffeine intake entirely. If you do not have an ovulatory problem, it is still a good idea to limit your caffeine intake to the one or two cups of coffee doctors consider "safe" during pregnancy.