

Is PCOS making me infertile?

We put this issue to three alternative health practitioners to see what advice they could offer

Q I suffer from Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) and have difficulty conceiving. I am in my early thirties and have been trying for three years without any success. My GP says that since I am not overweight I should carry on trying. I feel so depressed and frustrated. What should I do?

The nutritional therapist

Juliet Hayward says: "Polycystic ovary syndrome involves enlarged ovaries with multiple undeveloped follicles.



When the condition causes elevated levels of luteinizing hormone, androgens, an over abundance of insulin, increased blood sugar levels or high levels of estrone, it can undermine fertility. It can also cause absent or irregular periods, miscarriages, facial hair, hair loss, acne and oily skin.

High androgens can cause high levels of luteinizing hormone to be produced. High insulin can prevent ovulation and can cause an increase in androgens. It is important to balance blood sugar levels by eating a whole grain, organic vegetable-based diet with plenty of fibre. Aim to combine protein and complex carbohydrates at each meal. Avoid red meat as it is too oestrogenic. Avoid white flour products, sugars and pastries as these can disrupt blood sugar. Eat foods that support liver function, such as lemon, garlic, bitter greens and globe artichoke

Alpha lipoic acid can help insulin convey the glucose into the cells more effectively, reducing the tendency for the body to become flooded with insulin. Magnesium citrate and chromium picolinate also help to regulate glucose."

Juliet Hayward is a Nutritional Therapist. She works at the Harley Street Therapy Centre and can be contacted on 020 7275 7888 or 0795 866 9231.

The herbalist

Paula Grainger says: "PCOS can affect your chances of conceiving, but plenty of women do go on to become pregnant.



The condition is characterised by a hormonal imbalance which herbs may help to stabilise. *Vitex agnus castus* is widely used by herbalists for its hormone balancing properties, but it is important to use the right amount as too much can have a suppressing effect, which will not help you conceive. Try a dose of 10 drops of a 1:1 tincture taken each morning in water.

Herbs usually take a while to work so you may need to persist over several months. There are other herbs which are used to treat PCOS, particularly liquorice (*glycyrrhiza glabra*) and paeony (*paeonia lactiflora*) which can be taken as a tea or tincture. If you become pregnant you should stop the herbs as soon as you get a positive result. To find your nearest herbalist visit nimh.org.uk.

When you are trying to conceive, it's important that you know exactly when you are ovulating, particularly if you have an irregular cycle (as many women with PCOS do). You can find information about the signs of ovulation in any good fertility book or online. You could also invest in an ovulation test for a month or two."

Medical herbalist Paula Grainger, MNIMH, practises at Lemon Balm Clinic. Call 020 7267 3334 or visit lemonbalmclinic.com.

The hypnotherapist

Victoria Willis says: "The problem is that trying to conceive while you are feeling depressed, frustrated and stressed is going



to be difficult and only add to the issue. Instead of focusing on the lack of success you have had, turn your attention to relaxing, clearing your mind of stress and worry and start enjoying spending time with your partner, and waiting for the happy news that you are pregnant. To allow your mind to turn off your negative thoughts and be filled with positivity, try the following quick exercise:

Find yourself a comfortable and quiet place to sit or lie down. Close your eyes and start by focusing on your breathing, allowing your mind to slow down and your breath to move lower down toward your stomach. Visualise yourself going about your day; see yourself happy, confident and healthy. See yourself enjoying every moment free of serious concern about life's daily problems and in particular, the problems you have had conceiving. Focus on how you feel when you are relaxed, notice how your posture and breathing changes.

Remember how great this feels and how positive and confident you are. Like all things, the simple solutions prove to be the most effective so try this exercise first thing every morning, or whenever you start to get stressed." Victoria Willis is a hypnotherapist and meditation expert. Visit her website: victoriawillis.com to find out more and to contact her.

If you have a health question that you would like answered by our holistic clinic experts, please send an email to liz@aceville.co.uk or write to: Holistic Clinic, Natural Health magazine, 25 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 8JY.