

How Acupuncture Improves Fertility & Hormone Health

| Dr. Andrew Huberman

There are now a lot of data supporting the idea that acupuncture of all things can be very beneficial for improving both female and male fertility. And should a woman get pregnant for improving the quality of outcomes. That is the likelihood that there will be a successful pregnancy that is carried to term, not premature, and so on and so forth. Now for some of you out there you might think, oh of course acupuncture, acupuncture has been known to work for thousands of years. And therefore it's not surprising that it would assist with fertility and pregnancy for many of you out there. However, probably thinking acupuncture that seems kind of like fringe science. But what I can assure you is that there are now quite a few clinical trials funded by government agencies like the National Institutes of Health showing that acupuncture is a very effective treatment for a number of different things including fertility and pregnancy. But for hormone status, for stress relief, but even for chronic illnesses of different kinds including autoimmune illnesses. So this is no longer considered fringe science. In fact, one of the best laboratories in the world working on this is a laboratory out of Harvard Medical School run by a guy named Chu Fu-Mom. Uh, Chu's lab has really been exploring in a mechanistic way how the different stimulation sites that are used in acupuncture. So where the needles are inserted tap into neural pathways that link the different organs of the body. So for instance, they found that stimulation of a particular site on the lower limb can reduce inflammation dramatically throughout the body by way of neural pathways that originate in the lower limb and extend to areas such as the kidney and the pancreas. So all these um, quote unquote ancient maps of the human body as they relate to acupuncture are now being parsed at the level of mechanism, which I think is wonderful because it not only is showing us that so much of what has been purported and reported in the landscape of acupuncture actually has an underlying mechanistic basis. And with additional mechanistic understanding of course always arrive new and better practices. That's the idea to evolve these fields of acupuncture to evolve the fields of mechanistic understanding of our biology and health. And so the issue of whether or not acupuncture can assist in getting pregnant and in carrying a child to term and for that child to be healthy, uh, are really starting to emerge, uh, in a major way. And uh, rather than go into all those data in detail, what I

can tell you is that there are clinical trials and data supporting the fact that female fertility itself can be supported by acupuncture through several mechanisms One of which is the balancing and I realize that's a somewhat tricky term and I'll define it better in a moment the balancing of hormones across the ovulatory slash menstrual cycle including regulating levels of FSH so that they're not too high nor too low and restricting the FSH to the follicular phase of the of the menstrual cycle as well as using acupuncture to improve things like blood flow and the health of the ovary itself and other aspects of the female reproductive axis So acupuncture can operate at the chemical level impacting hormones It can act at the mechanical level impacting the different tissues through which the egg has to pass and so on and so forth Likewise on the male side acupuncture has been shown to improve semen volume quality of sperm sperm motility et cetera And in large part through changes in the neural pathways that innervate the very tissues and vascular input to the scrotum and testicles Because as we learned earlier temperature regulation of the scrotum and testicles is so vital for getting healthy sperm and increasing sperm quality In addition there are good data to support the idea that acupuncture can increase levels of testosterone free testosterone and the sorts of hormones that are going to support healthy hormone production and sperm production in males And this is distinct from applying testosterone from an exogenous source right So when we're talking about acupuncture and increasing levels of testosterone we're talking about increasing levels of endogenous testosterone So those ladig cells can support the certo cells and the certo cells can make that androgen binding protein And you get enhanced spermatogenesis you can find evidence for all of these different features both changes to the chemical milieu that is the hormones and changes to the mechanical milieu including for instance improvement of the pathways leading from the seminiferous tubules to the epididymis to the vast ephrine basically clearing out the plumbing so that more quality ejaculate can be delivered which of course is going to increase the probability of fertilization So when you hear that acupuncture can improve the likelihood of pregnancy Um That's an accurate statement for which there are now increasing amounts of mechanistic data If you want to learn more about how acupuncture can be used to contribute to improved fertilization and pregnancy there are a number of different excellent reviews on this Um Both as it relates to females and as it relates to males Um one of the best papers that I happen to like is one that we'll provide a link to in the references entitled Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine

for female fertility and overview of systematic reviews So a review a review of reviews this was published recently in um 2021 we'll provide a link to that and um there's also going to be a link to a review that relates to acupuncture for male fertility and hormone augmentation I should just mention briefly that if you're going to look at scientific papers one thing that you want to consider is also looking at the references that they reference And now of course papers tend to reference a ton of references in particular in reviews So what you want to do is look for the references that are showing up most often in the introduction those references often are going to be the most prominent recent reviews or the most important findings in recent years That's not always the case but that's often the case So if you read the first couple of paragraphs of these papers and these are openly available as full full text by the way online if you go to these links you'll be able to access the best papers the most relevant papers in the context of acupuncture supporting female and act puncture supporting male fertility and hormone status