



CAN EATING WELL ENHANCE GAMETE QUALITY ENOUGH TO GIVE YOU A HIGHER CHANCE OF CONCEIVING? SARAH E. LUDWIG FINDS OUT.

feed your foetus

There has been much speculation over whether or not nutrition has any influence on the quality of human gametes (mature sperm and eggs), so can eating well enhance gamete quality enough to give you a higher chance of conceiving? Recent research says it's likely.

For example, a new study from Spain shows evidence that men who eat more fruits and vegetables have better quality semen than those who consume more meats (protein) and full-fat dairy. Researchers believe it's the antioxidants found in fruits and veggies that increase semen health, mobility and concentration. The study also showed that not getting enough antioxidants leads to lower reproduction rates in men.

Another recent study has shown that taking supplements of the coenzyme Q10 can help with sperm motility (movement) and density, both important factors in the success of fertilization. Yet more recent research indicates that low zinc levels have been shown to be a major contributor to low-quality sperm.

However, too much of a good thing can be bad as well. According to a study done in April 2009 by the United States Department of Agriculture and reported in *Journal of Andrology*, too much of the mineral selenium can actually decrease semen quality.

The Bottom Line

Scientific evidence does show enhanced quality in gametes from good nutrition, but it's hard to pinpoint exactly what nutrients may help individual people. For this reason, your best bet is to make sure you are getting the recommended daily amounts of all vitamins and minerals, particularly those that are known to aid in gamete quality. Fresh food is, of course, preferable, but if that's not possible, make sure you are taking supplements on a daily basis.

Good sources of folic acid are leafy green vegetables



In a Nutshell

Here are some of the vitamins and minerals you need to make sure you're getting every day if you're trying to conceive, as well as foods that are chock full of them.

Folic Acid – This one is well-known for its ability to help prevent birth defects, but it also maintains a healthy reproductive system and has even been found to increase sperm production. Good sources of folic acid are leafy green vegetables, citrus fruits and dried beans and peas.

Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) – This antioxidant nutrient, found in every cell of the body, is sold in supplement form, but is found in natural foods as well. Beef, poultry and fish are excellent sources, as are nuts, soy

and canola oils. As stated before, CoQ10 appears to aid sperm motility and density.

Vitamin B6 – Water-soluble and found in food such as cereal, eggs, meat, yeast and whole grains, B6 contributes to a healthy female reproduction system.

Beef, poultry and fish are excellent sources of Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10)

Vitamin B12 – Shown to help keep the genetic material in cells healthy and increase sperm count and motility, B-12 is prominent in foods such as beef, lamb and chicken.

Vitamin A – Since being deficient in Vitamin A can cause the reproductive



IS AN UNHEALTHY URINARY TRACT BRINGING YOU DOWN?



Let an all-natural cranberry extract help you maintain a healthy bladder and Urinary Tract.

Two capsules of CranUT™ contain 700mg of pure cranberry extract - equivalent to two cans of pure cranberry juice, without the sugar, additives or preservatives.



CRANBERRY EXTRACT

www.cranUT.com

Safe for:

- ✓ Men, women & children
- ✓ Senior citizens
- ✓ Pregnant women

Diabetic and vegetarian friendly



Available at:



and other selected pharmacies

Distributed by:



DKSH Singapore Pte Ltd
Consumer Hotline: +65 6471 0888



Citrus fruits, strawberries and bell peppers are great sources of Vitamin C

system to function improperly, make sure you're eating fatty fish, liver and eggs, all high in A.

Vitamin C – This commonly known vitamin is another antioxidant that helps protect sperm and reduces the likelihood for sperm to stick together, which interferes with fertilization. Citrus fruits, strawberries and bell peppers are great sources.

Vitamin E – In one study, when infertile couples were given Vitamin E supplements, their fertility increased significantly. Foods high in E are sunflower seeds, avocados and Brazil nuts.

Lycopene – A powerful antioxidant found in tomatoes, high levels of lycopene are found in the testicles of healthy males, while infertility is associated with low levels.

Zinc – Being low on zinc can impede

ovulation and create low sperm counts. Foods rich in zinc are oysters, crab and barley.

Essential fatty acids – Necessary to sex hormone production, these can be found in fish oils, nuts and seeds.

Antioxidants – Recently shown to increase sperm health, antioxidants are easily consumable in the form of fruits and vegetables.

As always, if you plan to take supplements, check with your doctor first and ask about a reputable brand, since both quality and quantity can differ from brand to brand. Also, be aware of how much you are taking as too much of anything could end up being harmful rather than helpful. ■

Scientific evidence does show enhanced quality in gametes from good nutrition, but it's hard to pinpoint exactly what nutrients may help individual people. For this reason, your best bet is to make sure you are getting the recommended daily amounts of all vitamins and minerals, particularly those that are known to aid in gamete quality.

Good sources of folic acid are citrus fruits and peas.



Resources for Further Information:

Resolve.org is The National Infertility Association website and has a page about the impact of nutrition on fertility, as well as many other valuable resources.

The American Society of Reproductive Medicine, found at asrm.org, "is interested in all aspects of your reproductive life cycle. We provide information on infertility, menopause, contraception, reproductive surgery, endometriosis, and other reproductive disorders."

ChildbirthConnection.com has a multitude of resources on everything from fertility and infertility to stages of pregnancy to relationships.