

Can this fruit salad make you more fertile?

New research shows how nutrition can boost chances of conception for men and women.

About 5 million American couples are troubled by infertility - an inability to conceive after at least a year of trying. Infertility can have many causes, but diet and supplements can increase the odds of conceiving and giving birth to a healthy baby.



6 Ways to Boost Conception Odds

- **Get lots of vitamin C.** Vitamin C deficiency decreases fertility in men and women. At greatest risk: smokers and those exposed to environmental toxins. Researchers at the University of California at Berkeley found high levels of damaged sperm in men who got less than the 60-milligram RDA of vitamin C daily (the amount in an orange). Studies at the University of Texas at Galveston showed that 1,000mg of vitamin C daily for two months boosted sperm counts in infertile men by nearly 60 percent; all men getting vitamin C impregnated their wives. Women need vitamin C to help the ovaries respond properly to fertilization.
- **Take vitamin E.** Taking 200mg vitamin E daily increased fertility in men with low fertilization rates by about 30 percent after only one month, report researchers in Israel. They credit E's antioxidant protection of sperm-cell membranes.
- **Restrict caffeine.** A new Danish study of 430 couples concluded that high caffeine consumption by non-smokers reduced conception almost one-third. A high amount was 300-700mg daily (from coffee, tea, chocolate and colas); low consumption was less than 300mg. A cup of regular coffee has about 100mg; a cup of regular tea, 30mg.
- **Drink tea for two.** No one knows why, but drinking tea may improve pregnancy odds. Research at the Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program in Oakland, Calif., found women who drank at least 12 cup of tea a day nearly doubled their odds of becoming pregnant.
- **Avoid or cut back on alcohol.** Women who drink alcohol reduce their conception odds by 50 percent, according to new research at Johns Hopkins University. The more alcohol, the less the ability to conceive. Even two drinks a week were detrimental. Adding caffeine was worse. Drinking any alcohol plus more than 1 cup of coffee a day reduced women's chances of conception by two-thirds compared with teetotalers who drank less than 1 daily cup of coffee. Men: There's no proof, but lots of alcohol may damage sperm, researchers say.
- **Women, watch your weight.** Being too thin or too heavy can prevent conception. A woman must have body fat of at least 18 percent to produce estrogen leading to ovulation. Too much fat can *overstimulate* estrogen, disrupting monthly cycles.