

THE TOP 10 TIPS FOR CONCEPTION (that the docs will never tell you)

by
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Last year, eight million couples spent over two billion dollars trying to get pregnant. Only 25% succeeded at the doctor's office. The rest went home with empty arms and empty wallets. The doctors obviously don't have all the answers. As it is, they can't even predict when a woman's labor will start or a baby will be born. If the medical doctors aren't going to get most of you pregnant, shouldn't you be doing something else to help yourselves?

Fertility is big business. Big and unregulated. There are more laws on the books for getting tattooed, than for undergoing in-vitro fertilization. The fees for new drugs and procedures are soaring. Egg donors are now being recommended for over-40 women, which hike the cost per cycle from \$10,000 to \$20,000. Bill Handel, Director of The Center for Surrogate Parenting and Egg Donation, Inc. in Beverly Hills, says the high prices reflect the scarcity of physicians who perform IVF/ED. "They've been able to charge whatever they want," he admits. He assures that rates will drop as more specialists begin to offer IVF/ED in their practices and the competition for business tightens.

I'm not suggesting you forsake the medical route. But before you plunk down thousands, you may want to consider some low-key, low-tech ways to start the ball rolling. Expensive, high-tech treatments heighten expectations and produce enormous pressure. In some cases, the stress from trying to get pregnant can actually prevent pregnancy, and the resulting depression from the failed attempts can compromise further efforts to conceive.

Many medical doctors remain unconvinced that there is a relationship between stress and depression and fertility. Yet several studies have shown that stress can lower sperm counts, cause tubes (where fertilization takes place) to spasm, and create vaginal secretions that are hostile to sperm. Women already know stress causes irregularities in their menstrual cycles. The reason that these disruptions occur under stressful conditions is because the parts of the brain that are most heavily influenced by the emotions, the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland, are the parts of the brain that control all sexual function in women and men. *The link is there.* And finally, so is the research. Harvard psychologist Alice Domar, Ph.D. recently completed the first five-year study on the effects of stress and depression on fertility at the Mind/Body Medical Institute, a division of the Harvard Medical School. Her subjects were women who had been infertile for up to three years, with depression levels as high as those of terminally ill patients. They were given a ten-week course comprised of support groups, with lessons in meditation, self-nurturance, exercise and nutrition. Their depression levels were brought into the normal range and within six months, nearly HALF were pregnant! In the fall of 1999, I am opening the Mind/Body Infertility Institute at UCLA. It is modeled after Harvard's program. All Los Angeles clinicians have been personally trained by Dr. Domar.

Modern medicine acknowledges that placebos can work. We all know people who've made themselves sick. If the mind is that powerful and you can make yourself sick, couldn't you also have a positive effect on your well-being?

MY 10 BEST TIPS FOR CONCEPTION

1. Do make the sex as exciting as possible. Sperm counts rise with the level of excitement. Cervical and uterine movements that accompany a woman's orgasm assist sperm. The better the sex, the better chance for conception.
2. Don't waste energy fantasizing about the nursery décor. Remember that the baby's first home is your body and prepare it as lovingly as you would a room in your home.
3. Don't deliver yourself into doctors' hands expecting them to get out their wands. Choose your doctor meticulously and take 50% of the responsibility for your care.
4. Don't anticipate trouble. It can become self-fulfilling. The value of a positive mindset cannot be overstated. Envision yourselves as parents and stay focused on that picture. It will reassure and sustain you.
5. Do talk positively to yourself. Your body believes every word you say. If you're moaning and saying that you'll never get pregnant, you won't.
6. Do talk to your future baby. "Mommie is here for you. Mommie and Daddy will always love you. Take all the time you need." Remember that a soul is coming too, and connecting with the babies soul energy is a way to invite them here.
7. Do learn to meditate. It will help you find some peace and get a piece of your life back. Women often report they have no life when they are experiencing infertility, as temporary as it may be. You are not going to get pregnant when you are insane.
8. Do let go. Don't ever give up, but let go of trying to control the conception process. You cannot manufacture the outcome. Babies come when they want, not when you want. All you can do is be ready. There are forces out there more powerful than you. Take comfort in the fact that you don't have to do this alone.
9. Do have faith and trust that your baby will find a way to get to you. Fertility is an inexact science. Unexplained things can and do happen all the time.
10. Do stay open to all possibilities. When you are in a healthy place emotionally, you are in a better place to make parenting decisions. Most of you will have your own biological children. But for some of you, your children may not travel through your own bodies. They will be no less yours once they arrive in your arms.

Doctors told me it was unlikely I'd get pregnant because of blocked tubes from undetected chlamydia. I took drugs and had multiple surgeries anyway. Then I was diagnosed with lupus during my third year of infertility. I was obsessed and crazed. There were no medical answers for me. The doctors told me that stress was fueling the lupus. Medicine could help control it, but they kept telling me I had to relax. I wanted to commit murder.

The lupus diagnosis was a blessing, it turned out, because it yanked me out of my infertility pit. I suddenly had a more pressing problem than getting pregnant. I had to get well. I had to change my focus because I knew I had no chance of conceiving if I was sick. So I started to look for ways I could help myself. I read "Anatomy of an Illness," by Norman Cousins and "Love, Medicine and Miracles," by Dr. Bernie Siegel, which I strongly recommend. I started making little changes, like taking baths instead of showers, and substituting massages and walks instead of wine to unwind. I put on soft music, lowered the lights, screened all my phone calls and watched funny movies. I stopped talking incessantly about my health problems and stopped obsessing about my inability to conceive. I decided if I could scare myself and make myself nuts, I could calm and soothe myself. I learned to meditate, and this exercise in quieting down was probably the single most significant change I added to my life. Little by little, I began to feel better. I was able to gradually withdraw from all my medication. At the end of three months, I had no lupus symptoms and my blood work was normal. I was in remission!

Now it was time to prepare for my baby to come. Fresh from my success with the illness, I had no doubt that I would conceive. I repeatedly visualized my perfect picture of me cuddling and nursing my baby. I kept telling myself she was on her way. Four weeks later, to everyone's astonishment but mine, I was pregnant! (It helped that my husband had a King Kong sperm count.) The doctor who performed my C-section (the Obstetrics Chief @ UCLA) said he had no idea how I'd gotten pregnant. He said I was loaded with scar tissue. He proclaimed my daughter a miracle. And he wrote the forward to my book.

If I could get pregnant with blocked tubes, a chronic illness, genetic problems (my youngest brother died of muscular dystrophy), a faltering marriage, (it didn't survive, but most do), and no family support, ("If God wanted you to have children, you'd already have them."), you can too. I believe everything happens for a reason and everything happens when it's supposed to. If something falls through, it means something more wonderful is around the corner. I believe God has three answers when we make a request: (1) "Yes," (2) "Not now," or (3) "I have something better planned." Believe and breathe.

For more information about Mind/Body Infertility Institute here @ UCLA, please call 213-688-6119 or email Mind/Body12@aol.com. I look forward to welcoming you into the program.

Katie Boland is the author of "I GOT PREGNANT YOU CAN TOO! How Healing Yourself Physically, Mentally and Spiritually Leads to Fertility." The book is about everything you can do to conceive besides, and in addition to, going to doctors. It is available on the Internet and at major bookstores everywhere.