

Male Reproductive Health and Chinese Medicine

Chinese medicine offers time-tested methods for men to promote good reproductive health. The use of acupuncture — combined with Chinese herbal medicine, diet and lifestyle modifications — has historically addressed many of the health conditions which still affect modern man. This includes health concerns from infertility to prostate health. Chinese medicine offers a complement or an alternative, with therapies that are tailored to the individual's constitution.

The National Institute of Health estimates that four million couples in the U.S. are unable to successfully conceive. In about 40 percent of those couples, the man is the infertile partner. In a 2005 study published in the journal *Fertility and Sterility*, acupuncture was shown to significantly improve sperm quality, including count, shape and motility.¹

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that between 10 and 12 percent of American men will experience prostate issues in their lifetime. In a 2003 clinical trial published in *Urology*, acupuncture was found to provide lasting improvement in prostate inflammation as well as a positive influence on participants' quality of life, with a decrease in pain level and urinary difficulty in 67 percent of study subjects.²

Tips for Male Reproductive Health

Consuming a diet full of **fresh and seasonal foods**, getting appropriate **exercise** and **minimizing stress levels** are practices a man can do at home to promote reproductive health.

Kegel exercises are an at-home method to strengthen the muscles of the pelvis and promote prostate health. It takes patience and practice to identify your pelvic floor muscles and understand how to contract and relax them.

Here's how:

- **Find the pelvic floor muscles.** To identify your pelvic floor muscles, stop urination in midstream or tighten the muscles that keep you from passing gas.
- **Practice the technique.** Once you've identified your pelvic floor muscles, start by emptying your bladder. Lie on your back with your knees bent and apart. Tighten your pelvic floor muscles, hold the contraction, and then relax. Hold for three seconds and relax for three seconds. Be careful not to over-exert yourself. When your muscles get stronger, try doing Kegel exercises while sitting, standing or walking.
- **Focus your intention.** For the best results, focus your attention on isolating and only tightening the pelvic floor muscles. Be mindful not to flex the assisting muscles in your abdomen or legs. Avoid holding your breath.
- **Repeat three times a day.** Maintain even and relaxed breath throughout the exercise — repeat three times a day, three sets each time.



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¹ Jian, Pei, Strehler, Erwin, Noss, Ulrich, et. Al. (2005). Quantitative evaluation of spermatozoa ultrastructure after acupuncture treatment for idiopathic male infertility. *Fertility and Sterility*, 84.

² Chen R, Nickel JC. (2003). Acupuncture ameliorates symptoms in men with chronic prostatitis/chronic pelvic pain syndrome. *Urology*, 61.