



How to prepare for the conception of your baby with Chinese medicine

... over 2500 years of wisdom

Part 1

by Rebecca Mar Young

B. Hlth Sc. TCM (UTS), B. Arts Comm (CSU), Acup cert (Beijing), Cert IV RM, RYTA 200 Yoga Teacher

Pre-conception preparation involves improving the health of prospective Mum AND Dad to their optimum level and helping their body to produce the best quality eggs and sperm possible. Here at the clinic we have treated many pregnant women who have suffered from anxiety, stress, carpal tunnel syndrome and headaches. We have naturally induced babies with acupuncture, treated breech presentation and regulated the body to ripen the cervix prior to labour. Unfortunately, this was often their first acupuncture treatment, quite late into their pregnancy. I often thought how much better it would be for them to see us earlier on. I decided to write this article to educate women and men on the many benefits afforded to them, and their prospective baby, as a result of preconception preparation.

We live in a completely different world to our parents and grandparents, which is why it is important to prepare for a natural event like conception. There are so many more factors to consider that interfere with natural conception these days. Over the last 40 years our diets have changed enormously, as have the chemicals we use around the home and in the garden, DIY home renovations and their associated toxins are common, our leisure activities have changed, we wear more synthetic clothing, we spend longer hours at work, and our stress levels are much higher. Suffice to say, these changes have impacted our health for the worse as a society. So it is necessary to seek treatment to number one, improve your health and number two, find out what factors are likely to affect healthy conception.

The three main factors that are affecting healthy conception today are the state of one's health (including emotional health), diet, and lifestyle. This article is going to discuss these issues in three parts. Part one will explain the role Chinese medicine has to play in all of this.

So why should you consider Chinese medicine as a form of pre-conception preparation? Chinese medicine is a holistic form of natural medicine that has been around for over 2500 years. It views the body, mind and spirit as an interconnected whole. Its aim is to treat the underlying causes of why someone is unwell, as well as attend to their presenting symptoms. Not only is your physical health attended to but so is your emotional health, your diet and your lifestyle. So this is the perfect combination for preconception preparation, as it takes all factors into account. A treatment typically consists of gentle acupuncture, diet and lifestyle advice as well as Chinese herbal medicine if required.

How long should you take to prepare for conception? Four to six months is the recommended period of time. It's important to know that it takes approximately 100 days for an egg to develop towards ovulation and approximately 116 days to complete sperm production. This means it will take at least this time for any changes you make to your health to positively affect the eggs and sperm. Also, these days many women are taking the contraceptive pill and many men are often involved with toxins, so six months is the required recovery time in these cases, otherwise four months preparation is sufficient.

How does Chinese medicine view a healthy menstrual cycle? It should be approximately 28 days in length (if it's consistently a couple of days either side of this parameter then that's fine). It's ideal for the bleed to last around five days. There should ideally be no pain, no clots in the blood, no change in bowel movements or digestion, no change in fluid distribution and no signs of irritability or depression. If this isn't the case, your body is giving you signs that it is imbalanced. Depending on the severity of the symptoms, they may or may not interfere with conception. However, pre-conception preparation is about bringing you up to your ultimate level of health and wellbeing, and this includes focusing on what the menstrual cycle is telling you, and re-balancing that as much as possible before you start to conceive your baby. A good way to check how balanced your cycle is in relation to hormones is to measure your BBT (Basal Body Temperature) daily just before rising. Your Chinese medicine practitioner can explain how this works.

How does Chinese medicine view healthy sperm production? Because men don't have a monthly cycle like women, their reproductive health is monitored by all the other systems of the body, such as the Liver, Kidneys, Lungs, Spleen and Heart from a Chinese perspective. Balancing these systems will ensure that their digestive system is functioning properly, their nervous system is calm, their circulation is smooth, their immune and respiratory systems are strong. Regulating the overall body, mind and spirit will serve to ensure their reproductive system is in good working order and producing the healthiest sperm.

So how does Chinese medicine actually work? It works by changing the way the body responds to certain stimuli. The body and mind can get into bad habits that after a while seem normal to a person. Acupuncture and Chinese herbs are used to correct the imbalances that have occurred over time in the meridians (channels of energy) and organs that have been identified as weak, blocked, too

hot, too cold or whatever the cause may be. Each treatment builds upon the next one, so the person is brought up to a level of optimum health and wellbeing. The person is also made aware of food and lifestyle habits that may be contributing to their condition. In this way, their body's ability to heal itself is greatly strengthened and the person learns about how they can better care for themselves to ensure health and wellbeing are maintained long term.

It's not uncommon that couples will find it difficult to fall pregnant should they fail to ensure they were healthy before they started trying. This may sound obvious but many couples continue to try to fall pregnant at the same time as battling colds, digestive issues, unresolved emotional issues, a low libido and high levels of stress. So first things first – it's crucial to sort yourself out before you start trying to conceive as your success depends upon it.

A lady in her thirties came to see me with high levels of stress, low energy, poor immunity, digestive complaints and right shoulder pain. Within eight weekly treatments using gentle acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine her levels of stress were greatly reduced. Her fiancée said she was a much calmer person to be around since seeing me. Her shoulder pain dramatically reduced, she wasn't feeling sick and her digestion had improved. She hadn't had an upper respiratory tract infection since seeing me and her energy levels had increased. She was thrilled with the results and when the time is right for her and her partner, she'll be ready to conceive.

CHINESE MEDICAL THEORY

Chinese medicine has a unique perspective on health and is based on the following four premises:

- 1. The body is a microcosm of the universe which is the macrocosm.** This means the body is said to behave according to the "laws of the universe". For example, our body should be like a mountain, warm at the bottom and cool at the top. However many people have the reverse situation occurring, cold feet, headaches, tight shoulders, red eyes and irritability. These are symptoms of a deeper imbalance called "rebellious Qi" (energy flowing in the wrong direction) which can affect your reproductive system and should be corrected through treatment.
- 2. The body behaves according to the laws of Yin and Yang.** This means we are fluctuating entities of energy that are continually changing and moving according to our environment, our emotions and what we physically demand of our bodies. When the body is healthy, there is said to be a good balance of Yin and Yang. Yin can be described as the type of energy that is nourishing, earthy, deep, cold and female. It is synonymous with things like blood and solid organs such as the Liver and Kidneys. Yang can be described as the type of energy that is light, bright, rising and masculine. It is synonymous with things like hormones, nerve impulses and hollow organs such as the stomach and small intestine.

- 3. The body has a subtle energy system called the meridian system which regulates all the functions of the body.** Energy called Qi (pronounced "chee") flows through them. These meridians run close to the surface of the skin and also run deeply, connecting with all your organs. Each organ has a corresponding meridian. Acupuncture accesses these meridians to clear blockages of energy to re-balance the body and restore it to healthy functioning. The Liver meridian runs through the external genitalia of both men and women and is often the one that needs addressing for both parties. The liver is responsible for the free movement of Qi, for the harmony of menstruation, digestion and the emotions. It is often imbalanced as it is susceptible to stress, anger and frustration, which many people face in the modern world.
- 4. The organs and meridians are three dimensional in nature.** They each incorporate emotional, physical and spiritual attributes. For example the Kidneys and their associated meridian are linked with the emotion of fear and spirit of will-power. They are associated with the eggs of the female and the sperm of the male, as well as your lower back and knees, the quality and amount of hair on your head and the area beneath your eyes. They govern the flow of water in the body and are related to the season of winter. They are said to be the foundation of Yin and Yang and hence are known as the "foundation of life" in Chinese medicine. When the Kidneys are deficient in Qi, you may experience anything from poor quality eggs and sperm, to low back and knee pain, to early balding or graying of hair, to dark circles under your eyes.

INTERESTING ACUPUNCTURE RESEARCH THAT NEGATES THE PLACEBO EFFECT

A number of piglets who were still on "mother's milk" were exposed to bacteria in their food which resulted in diarrhea. They were divided into three groups: one group was given acupuncture, another group antibiotics and the control group no treatment. The "no treatment" group became very sick and sadly, many of them died. The antibiotic and acupuncture group **both** got better at roughly the same rate, but the acupuncture group **thrived better** over time (they put on weight as they grew older) where as the antibiotic group did not put on as much weight and didn't thrive as well as the acupuncture group over time. **What this demonstrates is that acupuncture can be used to strengthen the body against bacterial attack, so that the body's own healing mechanisms are activated to expel the disease.**

In the case of preconception care, this research highlights how Chinese medicine can strengthen your body, improve its functioning and hence, this ultimately leads onto better production of eggs and sperm.

Part 2... the importance of your DIET

The Chinese medicine perspective on diet: The type of diet that is appropriate for one person is not necessarily right for another. Once a person is diagnosed in Chinese medicine terms, they are allocated a dietary plan that will improve the efficacy of the treatments and help them to maintain their newfound health and wellbeing long term. In preparing to conceive, it is necessary that you are eating what's right for you. This may mean you need to eat hotter foods if you have a "cold uterus", cooler foods if you have too much heat in the body or more moving foods if you have Blood stagnation.

Let me give you a clinical example. **A lady in her late 20s came to see me because she was stressed out at work, suffered bad migraines, especially before her period, she had period pain and the menstrual blood was dark in colour, her energy was low, she constantly had a blocked nose and her dermatitis had been flaring up.** I palpated her abdomen (called the "hara") and found there was tenderness under the lower right rib as well as tenderness and hardness to the left of her navel. This indicated she was suffering from a "stagnant blood" pattern. According to Chinese medicine, there is a subtle energy system called the meridian system that affects your body (neurological, circulatory, hormonal, respiratory systems etc), mind (emotions, thoughts, feelings) and spirit.

Energy called Qi and Blood (similar but different to blood as it has energetic properties as well) runs through these meridians in particular directions. When these meridians get out of balance, they show up as a pattern on the hara (abdomen) and this indicates how the person is being affected and hence, how they should be treated. Inserting fine needles into acupuncture points along the meridian pathways helps to ensure the Qi is flowing smoothly and hence health is restored.

In this case, she was experiencing symptoms of Qi flowing upwards in the wrong direction causing stress in the mind, migraines in the head, a painful period, dark blood, a blocked nose etc. She was treated with gentle acupuncture to re-establish the homeostasis of her body which ultimately helped her body to re-activate its self-healing mechanism. As a patient you can feel the change in your abdomen immediately after treatment and this indicates its effectiveness. She was also given a diet sheet specific to her constitution that would help to move her Qi and Blood with ease. This meant eating many more vegetables, especially green ones as they relate to the Liver and the Liver is responsible for ensuring the free flow of Qi and Blood in the body.

"After six treatments with Rebecca I am feeling less stressed, more relaxed and also feel like I have a lot more energy. I walk out feeling on top of the world after every treatment. I was skeptical about acupuncture in the beginning because I had a bad experience many years ago where it was quite painful. I love Rebecca's treatments. They are gentle, super relaxing and best of all, the results are noticeable. I can actually breathe from my nose for the first time that I can remember. My dermatitis brought on by stress is almost non-existent and the treatments have also helped with losing weight."

Her migraines have also reduced in frequency and intensity, her period pain has substantially reduced and she is bleeding fresh red blood for the

first time in a long while. As you are unique, each person's diet in Chinese medical terms requires a little tweaking... however, there are some good rules to follow that will ensure you digest food well and these include:

- ❖ Thoroughly chew your food as digestions starts in the mouth.
- ❖ Soups & stews are the easiest to digest so tuck into them in winter especially.
- ❖ Avoid excessive fluids with meals, especially cold drinks.
- ❖ Take time out to sit down and eat with a calm mind.
- ❖ Don't eat whilst working or on the run.
- ❖ Where possible eat seasonal produce.
- ❖ Where possible eat organic food, especially animal products.
- ❖ Eat most food cooked and warm.
- ❖ Eat most at breakfast, less at lunch & less again at dinner.
- ❖ Eat with friends and family & ENJOY!

You may require foods that are easy to digest and build energy if you are lacking it, foods that help to make more blood if you are blood deficient etcetera. Diet sheets specific to your type are given out within a consultation.

The way you cook food also has an impact on how it is digested. For example, deep fried food is much harder to digest than steamed food. It is also much "hotter", produces more fluid in the body called "damp" and weighs you down, where as steamed food is lighter and has a more "rising" quality. Chinese dietary therapy is a huge topic. I have another article solely on that, so if you are interested, just let me know.

Caffeine: There are several studies linking caffeine intake (coffee, tea, cola and other fizzy drinks) to reduced fertility. A study of 1909 women in America found the risk of not conceiving for 12 months was 55% higher for women drinking one cup of coffee per day. It was 100% higher for women drinking one and a half to three cups per day and 176% higher for women drinking more than three cups per day. (*Yale University School of Medicine. Epidemiologic Review Vol 14, pg83, 1992*). A caffeine intake of three or more cups a day by women **or their partners** doubled the rate of miscarriage in a Danish study. (*American Journal of Epidemiology Vol 160 No7 2004 661-7*).

Water: Water makes up 90% of our body. When you think about how your entire body is made up of many different kinds of cells, and these cells are filled with an aqueous solution (made from water), it begins to make sense. To ensure you are hydrating your body, you should drink 2-3 litres of filtered water per day. The colour of your urination tells you whether you are drinking enough. If it is clear or straw coloured, you're on the right track. If not, you need more water.

Alcohol: Alcohol dehydrates the body. It also heats up the body and will aggravate a person's condition if they already have too much heat (symptoms may include: red eyes, headaches, stiff shoulders, irritability, anger, frustration, thirst, constipation, infection). Everyone doesn't need to completely eliminate alcohol whilst preparing to conceive, it will depend on your constitution from a Chinese medicine perspective. However, a study found that alcohol consumption in the week prior to conception was associated with an increased rate of miscarriage. For women, ten or more drinks a week were associated with two to three times greater risk of miscarriage while for men it was two to five times greater. (*American Journal of Epidemiology Vol 160 No7 2004 661-7*).

Organic food: our grandparents ate organic food because that was all there was back then. These days soil is used continuously and the mineral content of the soil doesn't have time to replenish. Chemical sprays are used and conventional produce simply doesn't have the same number or quality of nutrients as organic food, and it's covered in chemicals. This can perhaps explain the rapid increase in vitamin and mineral supplements in recent years. Where possible, choose organic fruit, vegetables and animal products. Regular animal products such as chicken and beef are routinely fed antibiotics and hormones to rid them of illness and get them to grow quickly and so when you eat conventional produce, you are also consuming trace elements of these drugs. When preparing to conceive, it's better to go organic, at least in the meat department.

The importance of vegetables: Vegetables are vital in preconception preparation as they contain so many necessary vitamins and minerals that we need to produce good quality eggs and sperm. Not only that, the essential nutrients that vegetables contain are necessary for every system of our body to function correctly, including a healthy, stress-free mind. They should be eaten at two meals daily to ensure you have enough. Always try to have some greens with your vegetable selection as they positively affect the Liver energy which is so important for reproduction.

Vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids for preconception: Often our food is lacking in essential vitamins and minerals, which means supplementing your diet will be necessary. Zinc is needed from preconception to breast feeding and is the most important mineral for male reproductive health because it essential for healthy sperm count and quality. It's also vital for optimal immune function. A good practitioner strength multivitamin that supports the reproductive system and contains folic acid is necessary to enhance fertility, and to decrease the risk for neural tube defects, such as spina bifida. Essential fatty acids correct hormonal imbalances and are necessary for fully functioning ovaries and testes. Lipoic acid is a strong antioxidant that reduces free radical damage to eggs and sperm as a result of ageing, toxins and radiation. As women age, so do their eggs, so supplementing with coenzyme Q10 may help re-energise ageing tissues. Your practitioner can help you decide what is best for you and your partner as there are many options available. Getting the right products for you and your partner is essential.

Part 3... the importance of your LIFESTYLE

Pre-conception health care is relevant for all couples regardless of whether they have fertility problems. However, many couples wait until they have a problem before considering a pre-conception health care regimen. Preconception care is the ultimate in preventative medicine because it has a huge impact for the better on the baby you are going to produce. Now more than ever before, there are so many factors that can interfere with the development of new life, and surprisingly this interference starts way before conception.

Since the woman is responsible for two thirds of the process, the egg and her uterus, it's most important that her health is functioning at its optimum level and that she feels energized, is getting good quality sleep, is eating well and has a calm mind. However, there is evidence that pre-conception care is just as important for fathers too. In some studies, the male accounts for up to 75% of reasons for infertility. Father's are at least responsible for 50% of the health of the baby due to the baby's genes being half theirs. Miscarriage rates have also been linked to health and morphology of sperm (shape of sperm). A study in Karolinska, Stockholm showed 14% abnormal sperm equaled a 14% miscarriage rate and 43% abnormal sperm equaled 84% miscarriage rate.

Parts I and II have already discussed the importance of sorting out lingering digestive problems, immune problems and hormonal problems with Chinese medicine treatments as well as your diet. A huge part of Chinese medical treatment focuses on your diet and lifestyle, so this is why I've devoted separate parts to these topics because they are so relevant and there are lots of good statistics to convince you of their importance! So what are those lifestyle factors that are so crucial to consider at this time:

Smoking: Smoking negatively affects the amount of oxygen available to your cells. Cells need oxygen to survive and grow. So it is best to leave it behind when preparing to conceive. A report prepared by the British Medical Association had the following key findings: men who smoke have a lower sperm count and a higher proportion of malformed sperm compared to those that don't. Women who smoke take longer to conceive. Men and women who smoke have a poorer response to fertility treatment. Women who smoke are twice as likely to be infertile as non smokers. Women who have stopped smoking take no longer to become pregnant than those who have never smoked. (*British Medical Association 2004* www.bma.org.uk)

Laptop computers: Men must avoid resting laptops on their laps. Men sitting with their legs together and working on a laptop computer can rise the temperature of the testes by up to 2.8 degrees celcius. This amount is sufficient to impair spermatogenesis (the production of sperm) thereby reducing sperm count and quality. (*Human Reproduction Advance Access published online December 9 2004*)

Hot tubs, Saunas: If these are taken on a regular basis by men they can increase the temperature of the testes and decrease the quality of the sperm. So avoiding

these prior to conception is important. It's fully reversible after a few months spent in a cooler environment if you've been over doing it.

Underwear: There was an experiment on rams in Adelaide where they were made to wear the equivalent of male underpants. There was a reduced conception rate and a greatly increased rate of miscarriage. It's really important that testes are cooler than the rest of the body as nature intended – which is why the kilt was such a good invention! According to research, the best underwear are scrotal slit underpants, followed by boxers followed by y-fronts. It's also very important to have natural fibres such as cotton or silk so that area can breathe and doesn't heat up. Studies on dogs who were made to wear polyester underpants had a large decrease in sperm count and an increase in abnormal sperm. The dogs recovered in three months of wearing no underpants. Also, sitting with legs apart is better than crossing legs for the same reason.

Tight clothing: During the reproductive stage it is best not to wear tight clothing as it restricts blood flow and causes unnecessary stagnation of blood, which means organs and muscles don't get the nourishment they need. This can be a pathological pattern in Chinese medicine irrespective of tight clothing but it certainly doesn't help. In a study on sperm quality, it was found that if the man wore tight underpants, jeans or trousers, there was twice the risk of abnormal sperm. If women wear tight jeans they restrict the flow of blood through the groin and waist or hips which does not do their reproductive organs any favours.

Toxins: Studies show very strong associations between toxic exposure and poor reproductive outcome, especially miscarriage. The findings are that exposure in either male or female are of great significance. Toxins damage genes and chromosomes and are considered to be: chemicals, radiation or infectious agents such as viruses and bacteria. For males, toxins damage sperm from puberty onwards, however the greatest risk occurs six months prior to fertilization. For females, her greatest risk is in her first three months of embryonic life and within the cycle of ovulation and conception. The following are considered toxic and best avoided prior to conceiving: anything to do with home renovations, especially DIY (you are living and breathing a toxic cocktail of chemicals – hold off till later), plastic wrap, household chemicals (ammonia found in some natural products switches off fertility because it's found in urine and is a natural protection to overpopulation), solvents, paint thinners, heavy metals, pesticides, gardening products, shampoos, lotions, cosmetics, toothpaste and perfumes. Getting back to being more natural is best at this time of your life. Check out more natural products at (Eco at Home in Willoughby, About Life in Rozelle, Alfalfa House in Newtown or your local health food store).

X-rays of your lower back: Research conducted in Adelaide found that when either the male or female had received investigative x-rays, they had an increased risk of miscarriage. The increased risk was 1.89 times for females and 4.28 times for males. The effect in males could last for several years. So unless it's really necessary, don't get an x-ray – or ask if your reproductive organs can be completely protected.

Security control checks at airports: Every time you go through a machine at the airport you are receiving radiation to your whole body. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest this increases the chances of miscarriage so where possible, it's best to avoid during the preconception period and throughout pregnancy.

Exercise: If you're a marathon runner then you need to be careful because you are likely to experience high degrees of dehydration and hence a depletion of essential minerals, antioxidants and vitamins. This also applies to over-doing it with boot camps and high-impact personal training in the months prior to conception and throughout pregnancy. There was a case of a woman who had two ectopic pregnancies and one miscarriage because she didn't drink enough water and she exercised too much. Dr Judy Ford who wrote a book "It Takes Two" based on her five year pregnancy and lifestyle study in Adelaide Australia, diagnosed this after she had been to all the specialists regarding her un-explained ectopic pregnancies. Once she drank 2-3litres per day and decreased her exercise, she conceived naturally and took the baby to term. Air-conditioned offices, processed foods and taking aeroplanes are all de-hydrating, so it's important to ensure you're properly hydrated – even if you don't feel thirsty.

Stress: According to Dr Judy Ford, cells in the body don't grow when one is stressed. From a Chinese medical point of view, stress stagnates energy and causes blockages in your meridians which can lead to feelings of irritation, frustration, irregular and painful periods, sore muscles, especially the neck and shoulders, headaches, digestive problems, respiratory problems, eczema etc. Moving to eliminate the sources of stress (if that's possible) or improving the body's ability to cope with it using Chinese medicine, before attempting to conceive is therefore a good idea. In Dr Judy's study, there was a case of a couple that were living with the husband's mother for 12 months whilst trying to conceive. As soon as they were in their own place, conception occurred naturally.

Keeping your feet, legs, lower back and lower abdomen warm: This is very important but especially for women as in the west we are more prone to having a "cold womb" from careless lifestyle factors such as sitting on cold floors, leaving wet swimming costumes on, braving the winter weather with bare legs or feet and wearing hipster pants and exposing our kidneys and abdomen to the elements. When your legs, kidneys and abdomen are allowed to get cold, the meridians also become cold causing contraction and energy stagnates throughout the body, as well as your uterus. This means that on a regular basis your meridians and uterus are getting cold which means the "Qi" (energy) and "Blood" aren't flowing smoothly, which means you'll be unable to conceive a child easily, if at all. Place your hand on your lower abdomen and then upper too see if there is a difference in temperature, the lower should be warmer than the upper ideally. Our bodies should be warm at the bottom and cool at the top like a mountain. Making sure your feet, legs, buttocks and kidneys are warm is the first step to pre-conception health. Often herbs will be needed to warm the body up as these lifestyle factors may have been in play for a long time.

Wearing high heels: As sexy as they may look, most of us agree that they certainly don't feel comfortable. Many women say, "oh it's fine once you get used to it" and that's where the problems set in. The body makes adjustments to carry most of your weight on the balls of your feet, adjustments that aren't healthy. You may "get used to it" but that's because your body has re-aligned itself to cope with the asymmetrical load. This creates changes in your blood supply to the pelvic region where your reproductive organs live. If you're serious about your health, think about wearing them in moderation rather than as an every day shoe.

Shift work: avoid this whilst trying to conceive. Our body clocks are highly aligned with the time of day from a western and eastern perspective. Critical surges of

hormones occur at times when we are meant to be asleep. In Chinese medicine terms, "Blood" is being made during the night which is important for all systems but also, the blood is said to house the "shen" - the mind and spirit. If this isn't housed well because there isn't enough blood, there will be stress and then repercussions on many organ systems that will ultimately affect reproduction.

So as you can see, there are many things to consider and learn about that will help you to conceive a healthy baby. If you wish to take a positive step in the direction of improving your ability to conceive a healthy baby, then please take the opportunity to discuss your case with one of the team at Rebecca Mar Young Natural Health. You can call us on 0404 457 911 or send an email to rebeccamaryoung@gmail.com.

References:

Seminar on Preconception Care by leading Naturopath Fancesca Naish at the 2007 Health Expo on Preconception Care. She has written many books such as: Nature's Way to Better Babies, Natural Fertility, Nature's Way to Better Breastfeeding and more.

Seminar on Infertility in 2006 by Paul Movsessian, leading Japanese Acupuncturist in Australia.

Dr Judy Ford's book "It Takes Two" which details her findings from her five year pregnancy and lifestyle study which involved 600 couples. This study is the largest of its kind so far in the world, investigating diet, lifestyle and drug factors relating to fertility and pregnancy.
