

Module 8 Lesson 4

Transcript

Today I'm talking about a really delicate topic. Fertility. I think fertility is really sensitive because pregnancy obviously is a fragile thing and people come to me feeling like a failure sometimes because they aren't finding it easy to get pregnant. We have some misconception in this country that if we can't get pregnant, something is wrong with us and that we aren't living out our genetic destiny. I'm here to tell you that it is hard to get pregnant. It is hard to stay pregnant. As part of someone's healthcare team, treat the fertility client with a lot of empathy and a lot of positivity, because there are things your client and your client's partner can do to enhance fertility. Before we dive into the topic, here's an overview of what we're going to cover today.

We're going to discuss the importance of showing compassion when working with fertility clients, foods and nutrients to focus on with clients trying to get pregnant, and lifestyle recommendations that can increase a woman's fertility.

I'm here to tell you that nature is one prickly beast. One small thing is off, and you can't get pregnant, or another small thing is off and you can't stay pregnant. Not your fault, not your client's fault. There's nothing wrong with you or your clients you're working with. You are not a failure. It's okay if you have to get pregnant in the modern way because the conventional pregnancy approach just isn't working for you, for some reason. It is absolutely the new normal to seek fertility treatment, and I'm here to tell you that it may take lots and lots of practice to get a sweet little baby bun in the oven. These are all things you may be discussing with clients. I wanted to focus on what women can do to maximize their fertility, because I have so many women who come to me who want to get pregnant desperately and make their bodies as strong and as healthy as possible to support a life.

Here's a quick story for you. When I met [Cheryl 00:00:01:57], she had been quasi trying to get pregnant for two years or so. She was told by her gynecologist that if her efforts to get pregnant didn't work out in the next six weeks, she would go to a fertility specialist and likely start treatment that may have included invasive testing and possibly hormone treatment and injections. Cheryl had never thought much about her diet before coming to see me.

She wasn't living a life of fast food and pop tarts, but on an average day she'd have something like this: for breakfast, a bowl of Special K or Cheerios with milk and a cup of coffee, at lunch, maybe a turkey sandwich with mayo, lettuce maybe, and maybe a tomato slice with a mini bag of chips and perhaps an iced tea. In the afternoon, her snack was perhaps a granola bar or

sometimes trail mix with M&Ms. Dinner was pasta or a burger. Never really overate, but definitely not the healthiest dinners. Sometimes there'd be a salad or a small serving of veggies, and dessert was usually a few cookies while watching TV. More often than not, Cheryl would have a late night snack of something like pretzels to round out the day before she went to bed.

I'm telling you this story because Cheryl followed my fertility recommendations and was pregnant five weeks later. There's no way of us knowing 100% if it was our work together, but Cheryl did credit me and us for her pregnancy. The baby, by the way, is not a baby anymore. He's seven and his name is Simon. So what did I do? Of course, I have no secrets here. I'm here to share everything with you. So check out your handout attached to this lesson for my cheat sheet on fertility recommendations.

I also often recommend a book. It's *The Fertility Diet* by Walter Willett, and it's based on all of the amazing information we have gleaned from the nurses' health study that followed 18,000 women. It really speaks to the science and direction of research, but also compiles national and international research on baby making. So I pull it out every now and again as a go-to with fertility clients the same way I pull out *Good Night Moon* when I'm looking to read a kid a bedtime story.

I'm going to give you the top 10 recommendations from this research, and also a sample from Cheryl's meal plan. I had to dust it off from eight years ago, but I still stand behind it. Avoid trans fats. We used to say avoid trans fats. These days, I say avoid processed foods, since trans fats have been eliminated from our food supply. Use unsaturated vegetable oils. If you're trying to get pregnant, you want to use high quality oils like olive oil, avocado, grape seed and flax. Use plant based protein, switching out meat protein for beans, legumes and nut butters is linked to improve fertility.

Choose fiber full carbs. Swap processed carbs, like that Special K and the bread on that turkey sandwich for carbs that are full of natural fiber. Have a serving a full fat dairy every day. I usually recommend yogurt. Fertility research is conclusive that having a portion of dairy is helpful for getting pregnant. Take a prenatal vitamin. Here, again, I'm not always a pill pusher, but to cover folate needs and make sure you've got your security in place, I do recommend a prenatal vitamin for all women if they are thinking about conceiving.

Eat your iron. Pull out the Popeye and load up on iron rich foods like spinach, beans, tomatoes, pumpkin and the like. And drink up. I have women who are considering getting pregnant work hard to drink up, but also to limit their beverages to water, seltzer, or mineral water.

Maintain a healthy weight. You can use BMI, which is what the study uses. Target a BMI 20 to 24. Women have the most luck getting pregnant in this zone. Be active. Exercise for weight maintenance, for physical health, and for emotional well being.

Okay. Those were the top 10 from the gurus at Harvard. So here's what I did with Cheryl's meal plan. You'll see I didn't revolutionize her whole entire life. I just met her where she was, and made some simple swaps that respected her level of knowledge, skill, and motivation. So for breakfast, I gave her a serving of Nature's Path Smart brand cereal, full of fiber, and a six ounce full fat Siggi's yogurt, half a cup of raspberries as well. For a morning snack, I gave her 10 almonds and three dried apricots. At lunch, I gave her three thin crisp crackers and two teaspoons of almond butter, and four ounces of fresh turkey, plus some carrot sticks, and an apple, and some flavored seltzer that she liked.

The afternoon snack was a Lara bar for her that she really enjoyed. And dinner was a black bean burger and a big sweet potato with olive oil or coconut oil, and a salad with two teaspoons of vinegarett dressing. And then in the evening, she had three cups air pop popcorn or a half a cup of ice cream.

Okay, so let's wrap up and review this lesson. Though there are many factors that play with fertility, it is possible to maximize a woman's fertility through diet and lifestyle. My top recommendations for fertility clients are avoid trans fats, use unsaturated vegetable oils, use plant based proteins, choose fiber full carbs, have a serving a full fat dairy every day, take a prenatal, eat your iron, drink up, maintain a healthy weight, be active.

You can incorporate these tips by helping clients make shifts to what they're already doing. Meet them where they're at, support them, motivate them, be empathetic, and work with them. That is it for today. I cannot wait to see you in the next lesson.