

THIN UTERINE LINING

Those of us who have done even a little gardening understand the importance of preparing the soil before we plant the seed - creating the right growing environment is vital for a new plant to grow. When we seek to support the development of a new baby similar principles apply: when the lining of the uterus is well nourished we stand a greater chance of IVF treatment succeeding and we also reduce the risk of early miscarriage.

In this article we will find out the reasons why our fertility depends on a healthy uterine lining - or endometrium - and how we can boost this through some simple lifestyle changes and with the support of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

Why it's important to nourish the lining of the uterus ?

The developing embryo is nourished by the endometrium lining until at least the 10th week of pregnancy. A well nourished uterine lining will be better able to support the healthy development of a baby.

The ideal uterine lining thickness is about 8mm. It should have a healthy blood circulation and have three layers which are visible on an ultrasound.

Studies have shown a correlation between the thickness of the uterine lining and the success of IVF treatment. Poor IVF endometrial thickness can lead to failed implantation and early pregnancy loss.



What factors can affect your uterine lining ?

Structural issues: These include fibroids and scar tissue. These can impair the growth of the uterine lining and result in a lining that is too thin to support implantation or the healthy growth of a baby. Western medicine usually treats structural issues with surgery. There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that TCM can help remove fibroids without the need for surgery.

Nutrition: The lining of the uterus is made out of blood and having the required amount of blood necessary to create a healthy lining depends on good nutrition. It is vital that you get enough iron and include blood building foods in your diet. Iron is contained in foods such as spinach, liver and other organ meats, legumes such as beans and peas, pumpkin seeds and red meat.

Cold Uterus: Poor blood flow to and within the uterus. In TCM body temperature plays a very important part especially when it comes to fertility. When the body and the uterus is cold, it can contract leading to poor blood flow to the uterus. TCM treatments are effective at boosting the circulation. You can add warmth to the uterus by placing a warm compress or hot water bottle to your lower back (over your kidneys). You should also keep your feet warm and eat a diet consisting of warm nourishing foods and drinks. Avoid eating too many raw or cold foods straight from the fridge as in addition to being difficult for your body to digest will also increase the amount of cold within you.

Lack of movement: Physical activity will improve blood flow, which in turn will help to support the effective building of the uterine lining. Exercise should be mild to moderate for 20-30 minutes daily. Types of gentle exercise that are good for fertility include: walking, dancing, yoga, tai chi and qigong.

Supplements to grow a healthy uterine lining:

In addition to a blood-building foods, many supplements can help build a healthy uterine lining.

Take these daily:

- Iron, 1 – 2 daily servings, exact dose depends on the type of iron
- Digestive enzymes to break down iron, 1 – 2 capsules with iron
- Fish oil, aka Omega 3 essential fatty acids, 2000 mg daily
- Vitamin E, 800 iu daily
- L-Arginine, 6 grams daily
- Turmeric, aka Curcumin, 2000 mg daily, STOP when pregnant
- Low Dose/Baby Aspirin (LDA), 70-80 mg daily

Have regular acupuncture sessions - Acupuncture is a system of balancing 'qi' - the subtle form of energy that Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) considers flows through channels, called meridians, in our bodies. Acupuncture reduces stress levels, helps improve blood flow to the uterus, improves egg quality, thickens the uterine lining and improves the uterine environment in preparation for implantation. If at all possible, I recommend beginning acupuncture treatment around three to four months before starting the IVF process and I encourage all of my clients to have weekly sessions during IVF treatment and in particular during the TWW and into pregnancy. Acupuncture can improve IVF outcomes by a massive 60% as it's one of the only treatments that can make a direct impact on your fertility and improve stress management.

Ensure that you find a fertility trained acupuncturist who has the knowledge, expertise and clinical experience to support you on this journey.