



FERTILITY AND CHIROPRACTIC

Chiropractic and fertility?

At first glance it might not be easy to see the connection between the spine and pregnancy. But the experience of many couples having trouble conceiving a baby says that there are reasons to consider chiropractic care as you are weighing your options on how to handle infertility.

Female infertility

Reasons for female infertility are a little more complicated than male problems. There are named medical conditions that can reduce a woman's likelihood of getting pregnant. There are other, more rare problems, but the ones that are commonly diagnosed include: Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome, and Endometriosis.

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) is inflammation of any body tissue in the female pelvis. This includes the uterus (the womb), the fallopian tubes (where the egg travels), and the ovaries. This problem often happens after an infection, where bacteria enters the womb and grows upward, potentially entering the abdominal cavity. It is not known whether women who become infertile after experiencing Pelvic Inflammatory Disease are likely to be helped by chiropractic care. Most chiropractic and fertility stories do not involve Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, and most PID does not cause infertility.

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) is one common cause of infertility in women. A disruption in the normal female hormones creates cysts in the walls of the ovaries, making the release of the woman's egg (ovulation) difficult. Cysts in ovaries can be present, however, even without a woman having Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome. In order to be diagnosed, women also have to have an increase in male hormones (androgens) in their system, and an irregular menstrual cycle. With Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome, a woman may go several months, up to half of a year, without having a normal period.

Endometriosis is the growth of cells from the womb (uterus) anywhere outside of the womb. For example, the lining of the uterus can grow into the fallopian tubes, out into the body cavity of the pelvis, and even into the bowel. Endometriosis is painful, especially during menstruation.

It is believed that instead of flowing out of the body, as is normal during menstruation, some of the lining of the womb flows backwards up into the body. There have been case reports of women finding help with endometriosis and infertility together.

Infertility without another diagnosis

A woman does not necessarily have to have the above problems to be considered infertile by her doctor. She may not have any symptoms at all, other than the fact that she cannot get pregnant. That said, even if she is not diagnosed with the above problems, many women who are helped by chiropractic care tend to have some signs, like irregular or painful periods, or other symptoms of hormones that are out of balance.

How does chiropractic help the infertile woman?

There may be more than one good theory about how chiropractic care can help women experiencing infertility. Here are two that are most well-known in chiropractic:

1. Pressure on nerves in the lower spine (near the low back and inside the hips) affects the tone (tension) in the muscles of the pelvis. The automatic part of the nervous system (the autonomic system) which controls muscles inside the fallopian tubes, stop working properly. (The fallopian tubes “catch” the eggs that leave the ovaries, and push them down to the uterus).

Because of nerve pressure, rather than flexing and contracting to pull the woman’s egg down the tube and into the uterus, the soft muscles of the fallopian tubes do relatively little contraction. The egg never gets pulled into the tube, or it just tends to sit in the tube, reducing its chance to come into contact with the sperm and develop in the uterus.

Chiropractic techniques, including upper cervical chiropractic, which unlock the lower spine may remove this nerve pressure allowing the muscles of the fallopian tubes to flex and contract.

This theory also explains why some women with endometriosis have good outcomes after chiropractic care. If the lack of muscle motion in the fallopian tubes allows uterus tissue to flow back into the body, then correcting the pressure causing this back-flow may impact endometriosis and fertility together.

2. Chiropractic care, especially at the top the neck, changes blood flow in and around the mid and lower parts of the brain. Blood flow increases around an area of the brain called the hypothalamus, which delivers hormones into the blood stream. Either hormone levels increase or they become coordinated enough to encourage a healthy ovulation on a more regular basis.

These two theories may explain why women experiencing infertility can become pregnant after their chiropractic care.