

# **INFERTILITY**

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# INFERTILITY

Infertility is defined as the inability to produce offspring in a woman who has been trying for two years with a normal sexual life and, of course, the reproductive function of whose partner is normal.

## AETIOLOGY AND PATHOLOGY

### 1) CONSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESS

Constitutional weakness of the Kidney-Jing is an important cause of infertility. Such weakness may be due to the woman's mother having been too old when conceiving her, the parents' constitution being not good, the parents' health being not good at the time of conception, etc. Because the Kidney-Jing is the basis for the Heavenly *Gui*, the woman cannot conceive.

## 2) OVERWORK

Overwork in the sense of working long hours without adequate rest and with irregular diet for years, is a major cause of Kidney-Yin deficiency. Kidney-Yin is the basis for menstrual Blood and the Uterus and when it is deficient there may be infertility.

## 3) EXCESSIVE PHYSICAL WORK

Excessive physical work or strenuous exercise and sports weaken the Spleen- and Kidney-Yang, especially at puberty time when a young girl's Uterus is in a vulnerable state. At this age, excessive physical work may take the form of:

playing too much sport



training too hard at ballet or gymnastics



working on a farm, etc.



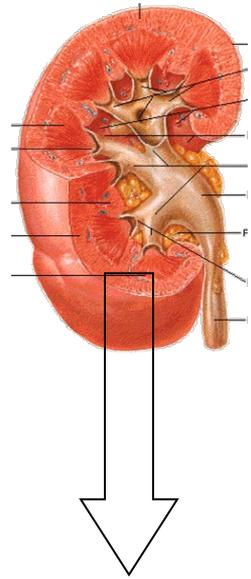
## 4) SEXUAL ACTIVITY

### Early sexual activity

Too much sex (or indeed any level of sexual activity) at too early an age (i.e. before and during puberty and up to about 18) is an important and increasingly frequent cause of disease in Western countries. It seriously weakens the Kidneys and damages the Ren and Chong vessels and may therefore cause infertility later in life.

### Sex during the period

Causes Blood stasis.



## 5) INVASION OF COLD

Invasion of Cold is a very common cause of infertility in young women - indeed, probably the most common cause of primary infertility in young women in Britain.

If a girl undergoing puberty is exposed to cold and dampness (especially during her period) when exercising or playing sports, Cold invades the Uterus, turns into internal Cold and obstructs the Uterus and the Ren and Chong vessels, preventing fertilization.



## 6) DIET

Excessive consumption of cold, iced foods and drinks also leads to Cold in the Uterus as above. Excessive consumption of greasy foods and dairy products leads to the formation of Dampness in the Lower Burner which also prevents fertilization: this type of infertility is often due to blockage of the Fallopian tubes.



When diagnosing infertility we should differentiate clearly between Shi and Xu. We must establish whether we need to tonify and nourish the body's Qi or to eliminate pathogenic factors.

In Empty conditions, infertility is due to a lack of the vital substances that are essential for conception:

Blood or Jing

The two main deficiencies are those of Blood or of Kidneys (which may be Kidney-Yin or Kidney-Yang). Whether it is a deficiency of Kidney-Yin or Kidney-Yang, the Kidney-Jing is always involved in its Yin or Yang aspect.

For fertilization to occur, the Yin and Yang aspects of the Jing need to be perfectly balanced: the Yin in the form of Water, Jing and Blood is the substantial basis for conception to occur, but the Yin needs the warming and fertilizing action of Yang, in the form of Minister Fire.

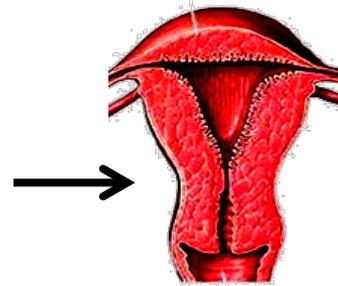


If the Water, i.e. the Yin aspect, is deficient, there is not enough nourishment to support the fertilized egg (or to produce an egg at all);

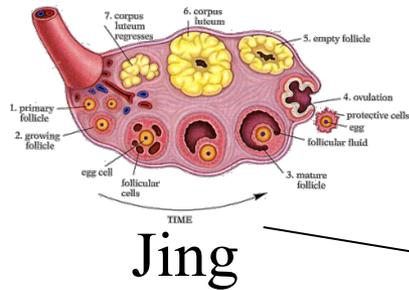


if the Minister Fire is deficient, there is no “spark” to transform and activate the Water, which therefore cannot fertilize or nourish an egg.

Vice versa, if the Minister Fire is excessive and pathological, the Blood in the Uterus may become hot and this creates adverse conditions for the fertilization or support of an egg.



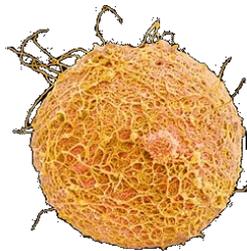
As we have just seen, the Fire of Ming Men is essential for the fertilization of the egg: the Jing, in its Yin aspect provides the basis for conception by producing the eggs...



Jing



Ming Men



...but the Fire of Ming Men is also essential for the transformation of the egg into a foetus.

In the case of Full conditions, fertilization cannot occur because pathogenic factors obstruct the Uterus and the Ren and Chong vessels. Such pathogenic factors may be:

**Cold**

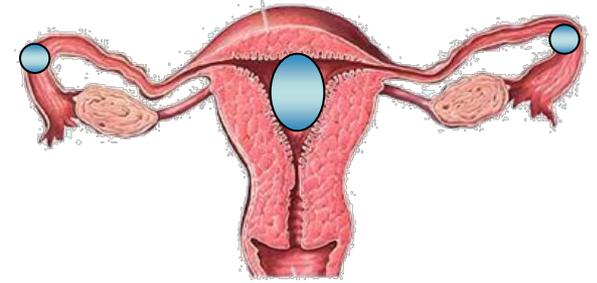
**Blood-Heat**

**Damp-Phlegm**

**Blood stasis**

Fertilization is a very delicate process fraught with difficulties and any of the above pathogenic factors may prevent it.

**Cold** is a very frequent cause of infertility: it prevents conception by obstructing the Uterus and its channels.



Cold also dampens the Fire of Ming Men, preventing fertilization.

Cold can be of the Full or Empty type, depending on how much Kidney-Yang deficiency there is. One of the most important diagnostic factors differentiating Full from Empty Cold is the pulse: in Full Cold the pulse will be Full and Tight, while in Empty Cold it will be Weak on the whole (although it may also be slightly Tight on the left-Rear position).

**Blood-Heat** also causes infertility, but in the opposite way. Blood and Jing are the basis for conception (the Uterus is also called the Blood Chamber).

Thus, if the Blood is hot it may create adverse conditions for the fertilization of the egg.

The influence of Cold and Blood-Heat can be compared with a bird's incubation of an egg; the temperature should be steady, warm, neither too cold nor too hot.



**Damp-Phlegm**, invades the body from the Lower Burner.

It prevents the proper movement of Qi and Blood and may therefore lead to stagnation of Qi and/or stasis of Blood.

Unable to function properly, the Ren and Chong Mai cannot gather the Jing for conception.

Phlegm may cause infertility by obstructing the Uterus and its channels so that the Ren and Chong vessels cannot function properly and the Jing cannot be gathered. Zhu Dan Xi (1281-1358) says in his “Essential Methods of Dan Xi”:

*“Inability to conceive in fat women is caused by the Fat [i.e. Phlegm] within the body blocking the Uterus.”*



From a Western perspective, Damp-Phlegm with Heat may correspond to pelvic or tubal inflammation.