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In the study, scientists found that by injecting old, retired breeder mice with the antioxidant Co-Q10, they were able to stimulate more eggs to develop, and the genetic quality of these eggs—their youthfulness—resembled those of mice eggs in their reproductive prime. The offspring of these older mice, who were the equivalent of a 50-year human, were as healthy as those from younger mothers. It appeared that the Co-Q10 was actually able to rejuvenate the mitochondria (the cell’s power source) and repair damage to the DNA.

Another study, published by Dr. Jon Tilley in *Nature Medicine*, shows that stem cells found in human ovaries are capable of generating new eggs—suggesting that under the right conditions, women can keep producing new eggs indefinitely.

Thus, it appears that the state of women’s eggs may be less predetermined than previously thought. And this gives hope that there are things that you can do to preserve and improve your fertility.

**Chronological versus biological age**

Our chronological age is fixed, derived from how many birthdays we have, but our biological age can be accelerated or slowed down depending on lifestyle and environmental factors.

Studies of the Okinawans of Japan, who have the longest life expectancy as well as the longest health expectancy of any people in the world, show that diet, exercise, stress and lifestyle can have a very significant impact on your health and longevity.

And it appears that accelerated aging in human eggs may also be affected by external factors as well. For example, it has been shown that women who smoke go into menopause on average two years earlier than women who don’t.

A study published in *Reproductive Biology and Endocrinology* on biological versus chronological ovarian age shows that both environmental and genetic factors contribute to egg quantity and quality and that biological age is more important than chronological age in predicting the outcome of in vitro fertilization.

**Accelerated aging**

Our current lifestyle in the West, characterized by chronic stress, lack of...
sleep, a high-fat, fast-food diet and over-
consumption of stimulants, accelerates
the aging process.

These factors leave us prone to dis-
eases such as cancer and diabetes and hasten
the ticking of the reproductive clock:
• Processed food diet
• Elevated stress/cortisol levels
• High inflammation levels
• Lack of exercise
• Poor sleep
• Social isolation and lack of support
  network
• Environmental toxins

Reach your fertility potential
1. Eat a whole food diet
Whole foods are foods that are in the state
that Mother Nature made them (the apple instead of apple juice), minimally
processed and refined as little as possible
before being eaten.

Slow carbs: Eating carbs in their
natural unprocessed state causes a slower
and lower rise in blood sugar. Slow carbs
include beans, peas, lentils, whole grains,
vegetables and most fruits. Eating slow slow
carbs helps to minimize insulin resis-
tance, regulate blood sugar, balance hor-
mones and prevent gestational diabetes.

Plant-based foods: These include a rainbow of high-fibre fruits and vege-
tables, legumes, nuts, seeds and whole
grains. These foods are loaded with
antioxidants and phytonutrients that
fight inflammation (a common cause of infertility) and nourish your reproductive
system.

Healthy fats: Eat fats that are pressed
naturally from whole-plant foods (cocon-
uts, nuts, seeds, avocado, olives) or are
short-lived, deep sea fish such as salmon,
herring and mackerel. Healthy fats com-
bat cellular inflammation and improve hormonal sensitivity.

2. Maintain a healthy weight
Strive for a body mass index (BMI)
of between 20 and 25 and a waist circum-
ference of less than 35 inches (89 cm) for
women and less than 40 inches (102 cm)
for men. Losing just 10 pounds (4.5 kg), if
you are overweight, can greatly enhance
your chances of pregnancy.

3. Exercise regularly
Exercise burns calories and helps
regulate your insulin levels, reversing
some of the metabolic imbalances that
contribute to weight gain and fertility problems.

And when you exercise, your body
rewards you by releasing a cascade of
feel-good hormones (endorphins). These
endorphins are Mother Nature’s anti-
depressants, lowering your stress and boosting your sense of well-being.

You can get the positive effects of exercise by vigorous walking or running
30 to 40 minutes every day. Amplify the
effects of your workout by incorporating more activity into your daily routine: park
your car a few blocks from your desti-
nation, take stairs instead of an elevator, hike, bike, swim or join a dance class.

4. Manage stress
Chronic stress shuts down all non-
essential systems and directly affects the
hypothalamic-pituitary-ovary axis (HPO)
that regulates fertility hormones. As well,
stress diverts the blood supply away
from the ovaries and interferes with your
body’s ability to respond to even balanced
hormones.

Self-care, meditating and mind-body
programs can help reduce distress and
promote deep relaxation.

Connecting to what’s important to
you and expressing gratitude all help to
counter stress and promote well-being.
This allows your body to relax and nat-
urally rebalance your reproductive
hormones.

5. Nurture your social network
Humans are social beings, and stud-
ies have shown that having a supportive
community of family and friends is the
most important determinant of mental and
physical health.

This is particularly important for
women who are distressed. Studies have
described a “tend and befriend” response
to stress in women where women seem to
deal with stressful situations by bonding
and nurturing each other.

6. Consider natural approaches
Fertility acupuncture: Studies
show that acupuncture can improve blood flow to the reproductive organs, balance
hormones, optimize implantation and re-
duce miscarriage rate. Frequency of acu-
uncture (such as three times per week)
appears to improve effectiveness.

Custom Chinese herbal formulas:
Chinese herbal therapy corrects underly-
ing deficiencies, balances hormones and
regulates the menstrual cycle.

Fertility/ anti-aging supplements
Women:
• Prenatal multivitamin/mineral
• Folic acid 1 mg/day
• Co-Q10 100 mg/day
• Greens: wheat grass 2 shots/day, or spirulina 3000 mg/day
• Omega-3 2000 mg/day
• Vitamin D 1000 IU/day

Men:
• Iron-free multivitamin/mineral
• Antioxidants
• Omega-3 2000 mg/day
• Vitamin D 1000 IU/day
• Zinc 30 mg/day (a handful of pumpkin seeds)
• Co-Q10 60 mg/day
• Selenium 250 mcg/day (2–3 Brazil nuts)

A final few words on the marvels of medical technology: we are fortunate to
live in an age where reproductive technol-
ogy exists. Even with proper diet, exer-
cise and rest, some couples will require
the use of donor sperm, donor eggs and
in vitro fertilization. But by living in
a way that promotes peak fertility—at
any age—you will optimize egg quality,
as well as improve the uterine environ-
ment for implantation and gestation of a
healthy baby.

If you are 35-plus and want a child,
you can make changes to your lifestyle
that slow down the aging process and help
you restore your fertility potential.

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