

Dietary Impacts on Fertility

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Rebekah Kelley: Welcome to the Humanized podcast, all about personalizing your health. I'm your host, Rebekah Kelley, and today we'll be discussing Dietary Impacts on Fertility, with Dr. Anna Cabeca. Before I introduce Dr. Cabeca, I want to remind everyone to subscribe and get all the other variety of casts in audio and video and transcription at HumanizedHealth.com. I'd also like to thank our lead sponsor, Village Green Apothecary, at MyVillageGreen.com.

Dr. Anna Cabeca is a triple board certified and fellow of gynecology and obstetrics, integrative medicine and anti-aging and regenerative medicine. Nationally known as "the girlfriend doctor," Dr. Anna is a passionate health advocate for women, helping them to truly thrive in body, mind and spirit. She is the author of two highly acclaimed books, creator of several popular virtual transformation programs, creator of several top-selling health products, and is a sought-after lecturer throughout the world. Dr. Cabeca's his latest book *MenuPause*, was inspired from the cuisines of countries where women experienced fewer menopausal symptoms. Dr. Cabeca offers five unique eating plans to help women break through their weight loss plateau, and improve mood, sleep, and hot flashes.

Dr. Cabeca, thank you so much for being here with us again.

Anna Cabeca: It's great to be here with you. Thanks for having me.

Rebekah Kelley: It's always a pleasure. You are so informative. You help educate us on what's going on. And of course, right now we're here to talk about fertility. And we notice that fertility rates are falling in America and frankly, around the world. What's happening right now? What's going on? Can you make us smart?

Anna Cabeca: Yeah, yeah. I think there's a few things. And we've seen it in the animal kingdom up until now. We're definitely seeing it in our population, women, men. And there's a few things going on. I think the biggest, one of the biggest factors that affects fertility certainly is stress. And, mental stress through a pandemic, uncertainty, and now a war in Ukraine, and just think, okay, what's going on with the world? So stress is one of the biggest factors. And I know this personally from my own journey with fertility and premature ovarian failure I was diagnosed with at age 39 and told I would never be able to have another child. But I'm going to teach things today that really do help, helped me and have helped so many of my clients and patients.

So the first thing is stress. The second thing are endocrine disruptors. There are so many more endocrine disruptors that we're exposed to. And it's estimated over 200 toxic substances are in umbilical cord blood, 287 to be specific in a small trial that looked at umbilical cord blood. And so that is phenomenal. I mean, it's just an incredible amount. You just have to be overwhelmed by it and think what is going on here? And we've had hundreds, you know, gosh, I mean, over a hundred thousand chemicals introduced into our environment over the last century. We are

the long-term experiment test subjects. So things that can affect our hormones and our fertility, and our, femininity and masculinity, are these hormone disruptors.

A classic one is diethylstilbestrol, which was given to millions of women between 1948 and 1971. And it's one of those flagship toxins that was touted by the medical systems, the FDA approved it and the American Medical Association approved it and recommended it for every woman who was pregnant to maintain a full-term pregnancy. Well, 8, 9 years later, little girls were showing up with reproductive vaginal tumors, reproductive abnormalities, as well as boys. And we know additional data from third generation, it's still affecting the third generation. Terrifying. And I now have a third generation, I'm a new grandma. So I'm like, oh my God, you're drinking out of a glass [bottle]... When I get to watch her, if she's drinking out of that glass bottle – otherwise she's breastfed... so I'm looking at all these ways, but still nipples are plastic for bottles, and we're trying to reduce carcinogens. We can reduce [carcinogens] and support our body by eliminating toxins.

Rebekah Kelley: Yes. Wow. Wow. Okay.

Anna Cabeca: Yeah, there's a lot there.

Rebekah Kelley: It's a lot to unpack, actually. Well, in your book *MenuPause*, you explore the link between food choices in menopause. So are there also then, I mean, you're talking about what you drink out of, obviously, glass bottles, minimizing plastic, but what about food choices also? Or maybe you can talk about, maybe it is environmental also? Maybe there's a couple of things beyond food that you want to talk about.

Anna Cabeca: Absolutely. And I think that the food choices make a difference. In fact, my world is getting people on board for Keto Green, that concept of healthy, low carbohydrate eating, but getting plenty of good fiber and plant foods, healthy fats and high-quality protein. And we have to pay attention to where these foods are coming from. And you know, for animal food sources, what this food was injected in, what environment were they swimming in, roaming in, eating, what we ate as well as was injected with, is critically important.

And I'll give you an example really quick, because many farmed fish are swimming in antibiotics and penicillin is one of them that's been used in the farmed fish industry. And I had a client who had come to me and he had said he ordered fish out [from a restaurant], confirmed he thought it was wild caught, and he ate it and had an anaphylactic reaction because he had a penicillin allergy. That was like an aha moment for me to think, oh my God, we are eating, we are affected by what we're giving our food sources. And that is, that is true. That is the tricky shift and our shift right in our coastline, and runoff from here in the island that I've been living for the last 22 years is southeast Georgia and the coastal crustacean population has changed and is quite different than what it used to be. It used to be a huge shrimping capital and it's not so

Dietary Impacts on Fertility

much anymore. It's less populous. So even we're seeing a reduction in our food supply chain too, in that area. So the fertility rates all around can be affected.

But one of the things that I know is that getting into a Keto Green type of eating style with intermittent fasting, becoming more insulin sensitive, is super for fertility. And a reproductive endocrinologist, Dr. Michael Fox out of Jacksonville, one of the best reproductive endo and IVF centers, fertility centers in the country, he says for years, he's been putting people on a healthy form of a ketogenic diet, really restricting carbohydrates, because it does improve fertility rates.

So we should not wait until we're trying to get pregnant to be Keto Green. We really need to start that. But that is something that can make a difference. Plus, how our food was processed, packaged. Those are things to consider.

Rebekah Kelley: Explain that, when you say how our foods are processed and packaged, give me an example. Because I think it's... sometimes you have to really think about the whole chain of events that take place until that actual morsel of food goes in your mouth. And like you said, like the fish that were given the penicillin and your client had the anaphylactic shock from it. There so many different things that we have to take into consideration. So what are the things we should be looking for?

Anna Cabeca: Well, I think if you think if you're buying food that's pre-packaged, then it's sitting wrapped in plastic for, how long has it been sitting there, wrapped in plastic and how will that affect you? If it's in foil or aluminum, how much are we getting if we're eating things in aluminum? That's another critical consideration. If we're microwaving things, are we decreasing their nutrient potential and effect on our body? How is that affecting us? I think these are where we can do... we can go a long way obsessing, but we really want to look at cleaning up our food chain as much as possible. And our water supply, drinking out of plastic bottles; phthalates are hormone disruptors. And drinking hot coffee from a plastic lid. Those are endocrine disruptors and can affect our hormones, our thyroid and our fertility.

Rebekah Kelley: So keep it in glass and stainless steel?

Anna Cabeca: Stainless steel and glass to the best of your ability. I love reusable stainless steel containers and, yeah, absolutely. Exactly. Cheers! [Holds up stainless steel drink container]

Rebekah Kelley: Right back at ya! [Holds up her stainless steel drink container] That's great. That's really great information. So, you know, this kind of goes into our next question then, around do's and don'ts for men and for women, for fertility.

Anna Cabeca: Do's and don'ts for men and women for fertility. One thing is understanding that if you want to get pregnant, if you're planning on getting pregnant, anytime, it's never too late, you really want to support detoxification and healthy gut. From a functional medicine

standpoint, we're always talking about the gut. So cleaning up the gut, a detox program, like my Keto Green Detox, supporting our liver functions with phase one and phase two detoxifier supplements. For me and my world it's the Keto Green Detox support and adrenal support. So my Mighty Maca Plus with 30 superfoods. So those are supplements that can help, with a probiotic. And when it comes for female reproductive health, and the vaginal mucosa, keeping the vagina healthy at a healthy, acidic pH is key. And it starts, a healthy vagina, starts with a healthy gut. I mean, it is an extension of our, essentially, our gastrointestinal mucosa, to a degree.

So we want to keep that healthy, keep a healthy, diverse bacteria and eliminate things that are affecting our overall health or probiotics, et cetera. So avoiding antibiotics, avoiding antacids, avoiding anything that we mentioned that's endocrine disruptors, and definitely supporting with supplementation.

So for my clients that want to increase fertility, I recommend Keto Green and detox support, add a probiotic, support the adrenals with Mighty Maca Plus, and consider adding also an omega-3 fish oil, and that's where I would start.

Then of course I'm looking at their methylation and their genetics. Do we need additional methylation support? Could we add in additional carnitine? When I learned about all the benefits of carnitine, I definitely supplemented with that in my last two pregnancies and that was game changing. And as a result of these things that I learned and these superfoods that I experienced from my journeys and travels around the world, that's what helped me reverse – I always say with God's blessing – reverse my early menopause. And so I became pregnant naturally at age 41, after being told I would never be able to have another child.

Rebekah Kelley: Now you're taking that journey and you're sharing it with others, helping them heal. That's very beautiful. Thank you for that.

Are there any other... you named quite a few things. Are there any other supplements that you think are particularly useful, or did you pretty much give us that list?

Anna Cabeca: Those are core. And then of course supporting, again, methylation. And DHA and EPA – so healthy, high-quality fish oils. The mercury, you have to have them check for mercury and all that sustainably sourced. I think those are essential for healthy pregnancy. Plus, in testing women postpartum, and even 2 years after having a baby, every woman I've tested that have had two or more babies have very low omega-3 fatty acid levels in their blood. And so we want to replenish that and keep that as healthy as possible. So that's one thing. And probiotic.

I think those are the core ones that I can think of. It depends on a patient's genetics and epigenetics and what else they may be dealing with, if I'm going to add something. And I can think of insulin sensitizers, like berberine for fertility to help get them pregnant, adding in an

Dietary Impacts on Fertility

insulin sensitizer, or prescribing Metformin, if I need to for that patient. And if I'm using fertility drugs, to make sure, again, I'm supporting ovulation, supporting menstruation, maybe adding progesterone the second half of the cycle to support the luteal phase, if I need to. So those would be additional things I would add.

Rebekah Kelley: Awesome. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about fertility? Or anything else?

Anna Cabeca: Yeah, I think that there's so many really good stories. One client that I've had, who wrote to me, she was experiencing, she had two miscarriages and day 21 progesterone level of 6. And so that is low. We want it to be 15 to 20 for day 21 to maintain a pregnancy, so attributed her miscarriages to luteal phase defect, low progesterone in the second half. Really, it starts earlier, adrenal dysfunction. So she had followed my early version of my Keto Green plan, started doing Mighty Maca, and this is before I laid eyes on her. And she had been, you know, I had closed my clinic by that time, and she had been seeing another provider. And she wrote in, and she said after 2 months of following my plan, drinking Mighty Maca Plus, her day 21 progesterone level was 17. And so she had conceived and maintained her pregnancy and didn't supplement any further than that. So we definitely saw the Mighty Maca baby from that one. And that was a beautiful addition. A lot we can do that's in our own control that we don't necessarily need a prescription for. That's really empowering.

That was part of my journey. Again, I failed several courses at the highest doses of fertility meds without any ovarian response. And it was really traumatic for me to go through that and just such a gift and a miracle to have that reversed naturally and to conceive. It's not something I studied as an OB GYN.

So these adrenal adaptogens and supporting detoxification, healing the gut, mind, body and spirit. I mean, I can't emphasize [enough], you cannot separate the mind from the body, you just can't do it. So healing, in doing that work that I'll say increases the most powerful hormone in our body, the hormone oxytocin. That's the goal, especially when it comes to fertility. Oxytocin is the hormone of labor and delivery, and it helps us into contraction, have our contractions, and then bond with this amazing new being in our lives.

I would also say Rebekah, that wherever you're at on your fertility journey, it's important to have faith, not lose hope, and keep asking questions, get curious, try to understand what's going on if you're struggling with fertility. And honestly, it's never too late. To have a healthy pregnancy, you have to be healthy, and you create that environment despite the external circumstances that are around you. You can create a very optimally, healthy internal environment. So I want to give people that hope, too.

Rebekah Kelley: It's sweet. I know it's very true. It's true because you're telling your story and you have these experiences that you've had with your clients, your patients, but it's just also

Dietary Impacts on Fertility

sweet. I love the story of hope, right? Because sometimes, like you said, it can be so easy to kind of lose that with the surroundings that we have.

Dr. Cabeca can be found at www.DrAnnaCabeca.com. I'm going to spell that. D R A N N A C A B E C A.com. Let me remind you so subscribe and get access to all Humanized videos, podcasts and transcriptions from all of our thought leaders on personalized health at HumanizedHealth.com. Thank you so much, Dr. Anna for being with us, it's been a complete pleasure.

Anna Cabeca: Thanks for having me.