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## Tips for preparing for IVF



### General Health and fitness

- If you are having repeated cycles try and allow a break of a month or two between cycles to allow your ovaries to recover.
- IVF stands a better chance of working if you're not overweight (or seriously underweight). A nutritionists and/or fitness therapists can create a programme for you to help you lose weight slowly and gradually.
- Don't smoke and avoid smoky atmospheres, as cigarette smoke affects the lining of the womb.
- Avoid aerobic exercise once you start your cycle. As your hormonal system shuts down to prepare for IVF, your body needs rest. Gentle exercise such as walking and yoga is fine.
- Limit the amount of time spent sitting at a desk / computer as this restricts blood flow. Rest and have early nights.

### Nutritional preparation

We strongly advise that you have a nutritional consultation prior to starting IVF, this can be arranged at the Zita West Clinic (at a 20% reduced rate) 020 72240017. Good nutrition for the man and the woman must be a priority as it will impact on every aspect of your health and wellbeing during your IVF process.

- Take a good quality multi-vitamin and mineral supplement such as Zita West Vitafem which contains vitamins C, E, A and B complex, zinc, magnesium, selenium, iron and Co-enzyme Q10 which play a vital role in egg production, fertilisation and implantation.
- Essential fatty acids are vitally important – we recommend 2 Vital DHA a day in the time leading up to IVF, increasing to four a day during treatment.
- Having a Vodder Detoxifying Lymphatic Drainage Massage will also help with the detox process.

### Reproductive Health

- Ideally you will be having acupuncture in the lead up to starting your IVF cycle. Continue having weekly acupuncture from the time that you start your cycle up to egg collection. This will help to improve the flow of blood and energy to your reproductive organs, balance the body, build up the womb lining, grow follicles and help with implantation.
- Keep your lower back and abdomen warm, particularly leading up to egg collection and between egg collection and transfer. Use a hot bag, hot water bottle, moxa stick or your hands. Do not use heat after embryo transfer.

### Psychological and emotional preparation

- Visualisation is very important at every stage of IVF. There are so many hurdles to overcome. Try not to allow yourself to slip into anxiety or negative thinking. At each stage of treatment, visualise what is happening in your body – the follicles growing, the eggs maturing, the womb

lining thickening, the embryos implanting. You may find the Zita West Relaxation and Visualisation CD helpful at this time.

- Explore relaxation techniques to find one that suits you and fits into your life easily. Try meditation, yoga or tai chi.

## Stress Management

- IVF is a stressful business so take time out occasionally to stop thinking and worrying and spend time with your partner doing things you both enjoy. You need to be able to support each other through this and to still have a good relationship at the end of it. You'll both react differently to the pressures, so try to find ten minutes each evening to talk about what has happened and how you are feeling, so everything is out in the open.
- Do not underestimate the time involved or the space you need to make in order to have IVF.
- If you feel that you need extra support

discuss this with your acupuncturist who can refer you to an appropriate Counsellor.

- Breathing dynamics and visualisation is an excellent way to combat stress during the IVF process. Good breathing technique also helps to circulate oxygen around the body and into the reproductive organs. Ancient Chinese masters taught that the chi is located within the mind and that the mind leads the chi and makes it move. If your mind stays in one spot, your chi becomes stagnant. Once you feel you've mastered the breathing technique, you will be able to focus your mind and cope with the stresses of IVF treatments.

## IVF Protocols

### ***Tips for the long protocol – down regulation/suppression***

- It's not easy to take a whole month off work, but be aware of what's happening to your hormonal system and slow down. Take things as easy as you possibly can and RELAX. Get plenty of early nights - sleep is very important for your body at this stage.
- Allow plenty of time in your schedule for appointments - at least seven hours a

week, depending on how often your clinic performs scans and blood tests and how long you're kept waiting at the clinic.

- Close your eyes and breathe deeply. Visualise the hormones in your body shutting down your ovaries and no follicles developing. Tell yourself everything is working as it should be and that you are strong and healthy.

### ***Tips for the short protocol – stimulation***

- Stay relaxed and take each day as it comes. Anxiety and stress releases adrenaline into your blood stream. Spend some time each day sitting quietly and breathing deeply. Banish negative thoughts as they arise.
- Repeat positive affirmations out loud: ‘my eggs are growing, ripening and maturing; my eggs are of good quality; my womb lining is growing thick’. Imagine sending oxygen to your womb lining, helping it to grow. Visualise your eggs growing. Focus on how you want your body to respond.

### **Egg collection and Transfer**

- Keep the lower abdomen warm up to and before egg collection. Do not use extra heat afterwards, just eat warm nourishing foods and keep warm.
- A recent study has shown that women who had acupuncture before and after embryo transfer had a 42% success rate per cycle compared to 26% amongst those who did not. Studies also support the contribution that relaxation can make to improving conception rates.
- Rest as much as you can and get plenty of early nights. After transfer, we recommend rest for a minimum for two - three days to give your embryos every possible chance to implant. Don't feel guilty about taking time off and staying in bed if you wish. A gentle walk after day 4 is fine. The kidneys play an important role in reproduction according to Chinese medicine. They are especially active between 5pm and 7pm so this is a crucial time to rest quietly.
- AVOID caffeine, smoking, alcohol, sex, drugs, flying, heavy lifting, strenuous exercise, housework (including vacuuming), horse riding and aerobics, sun bathing, saunas, hot tubs, Jacuzzis, swimming and hot baths. Take a shower instead.
- Try to spend 15 minutes every morning and evening visualising what is happening inside your womb - your ovaries healing, the swelling reducing, the womb lining thickening and the thick red blood flow, the embryos floating safely, the cells dividing, the embryos embedding in the thick endometrium.
- Colour can help to enhance your mood and balance your body. Different colours are linked to the chakras or energy centres of the body. Blue is relaxing and orange is particularly helpful around the time of transfer. Surround yourself with these colours using blankets, scarves and flowers.



# The Zita West Five Star Fertility Care Plan

## General Health and Fitness

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## Stress

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## Reproductive Health

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## Psychological & Emotional Health

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## Nutritional Health

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## Review

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