

IMPROVING FERTILITY AND CREATING OPTIMAL HEALTH TO CONCEIVE AND DELIVER A TRULY HEALTHY BABY

The idea of providing optimal conditions for pregnancy, birth, bonding and breastfeeding, well before the mother-to-be is even pregnant, is rapidly gaining popularity all over the world. Many experts see the four months immediately preceding conception as a critical stage in the reproductive process. Factors such as nutritional, environmental, emotional and lifestyle issues are taken into consideration, with both partners equally involved in the preparations to provide their future child with every possible advantage.

You might ask why, when from time immemorial, babies have been coming into the world without too much trouble, preconception health care is now considered important. Take a moment to reflect on current statistics.

- 1 couple in 6 is infertile
- 1 woman in 5 will miscarry (some say 1 woman in 3)
- 1 baby in 10 is born prematurely
- 1 baby in 30 is born with a congenital abnormality
- 1 woman in 5 has a Caesarean
- 1 woman in 3 suffers from some degree of post-natal depression
- Only 1 woman in 10 breastfeeds beyond her child's first birthday
- 1 child in 10 has a learning or behaviour problem
- 1 child in 5 suffers from asthma.

So not only are we seeing a lot of reproductive problems and a lot of infant ill health, but the incidence of all these conditions has increased in recent years. However studies carried out in the UK by Foresight Association for the Promotion of Preconceptual Care, in conjunction with Surrey University show that most of these problems can be avoided if both prospective parents are in excellent health before they conceive a child.

In fact Foresight's two studies on 367 and 1076 couples assessed over 2 years saw some major results respectively:

Miscarriage Rate:	0% and 3.5% compared with the normal population rate of 25%
Malformation Rate:	0% and 0.47% compared with the normal population rate of 6%
Stillbirth Rate:	0% and 0.38% compared with the normal population rate of 1.37%
Conception Rate:	89% and 81.2%

Other key statistics to note are that couples undertaking IVF and preconception preparation saw a success rate of 43.5% versus the normal rate of 22.6% with just IVF. The average age for the females was 34 (with a range from 22-45), and for the males 36 (with a range of 25-59). 37% of the couples had a history of infertility ranging from 1-10 years and 38% had a history of miscarriage, ranging from 1-5 incidences.

As couples planning pregnancy become more aware of the part they must play in creating the optimal environment for truly healthy eggs and sperm and subsequently for a healthy baby to develop they must seek out the nutrition, environments and products that best support their own efforts and address their core or foundation health.

From a product stand point leading the way in this holistic approach to fertility and preconception health are adaptogens. While orthodox pharmacologists may be unfamiliar with the term, and also with the mode of action of this elite group of plant-based products, adaptogens have long been recognised and valued for their seeming 'intelligence' and ability to create harmony and homeostasis in the body. More recently, thousands of research papers from around the world have demonstrated the extraordinarily diverse composition of the true adaptogens, their ability to effect each individual and each regulating system differently depending on whether that system is hyper or hypo-functioning, and finally for their almost complete lack of toxic or adverse effects.

And yet true adaptogens, of which Ginseng is probably one of the best known, are extremely rare in Nature. Russian researchers, working exclusively to identify and elucidate their mode of action, from 1950, have studied more than 4,000 medicinal plants, yet identified only 12 with true adaptogenic properties. They and other researchers have concluded that the herbal

constituents found in adaptogens work to stimulate the neuroendocrine and immune systems via multiple metabolic pathways. These unique herbs affect the brain, nerves, endocrine glands (pituitary, thyroid, parathyroid, adrenal, thymus, pineal, pancreas, ovaries and testes) and the immune system by helping it re-regulate, normalize and enhance function. There are multiple theories as to what is occurring and even scientists are unsure.

However, they do acknowledge that these products provide a powerful means of supporting our bodies as they attempt to deal with the stresses of 21st century living. These stresses range across nutritional, lifestyle, environmental, physical, structural, mental and emotional issues and are becoming more diverse and more likely to compromise our wellbeing, particularly our fertility and reproductive capacity. For example, thanks to the proliferation of mobile phone and wireless technology, our exposure to electromagnetic radiation is 100 million times what it was only 20 years ago. When we are all unavoidably exposed to these and other potential stressors, there are very good reasons for the resurgence of interest in the power of adaptogens.

An adaptogenic product with long history of traditional use is Maca. While part of the staple diet in Peru for centuries, Western science has recently confirmed two distinct Maca species, with only one displaying genuine therapeutic effects. In addition, several different phenotypes exist within that active species, each with physiology and gender-specific effects. Product efficacy through optimal growing conditions, quality and dosages large enough to deliver therapeutic benefit, have also proven to be critical.

One company leading the research into Maca's adaptogenic properties is Natural Health International. NHI has combined the four main phenotypes of the true species of Maca - *Lepidium peruvianum* Chacon - in different proprietary ratios to deliver a men's and a women's product. NHI has also patented a manufacturing process that increases the concentration of the entire spectrum of actives to achieve significant therapeutic benefits. NHI's double-blind placebo-controlled clinical trials on their proprietary product Maca-GO™ - commercially known as Femenessence™ were published in *Menopause* and the *International Journal of Biomedical Science* and demonstrated significant hormone-balancing, stress reducing and immune-modulating effects, together with enhanced gastro-intestinal absorption of iron and calcium, further confirming the use of Femenessence™ to support female reproductive



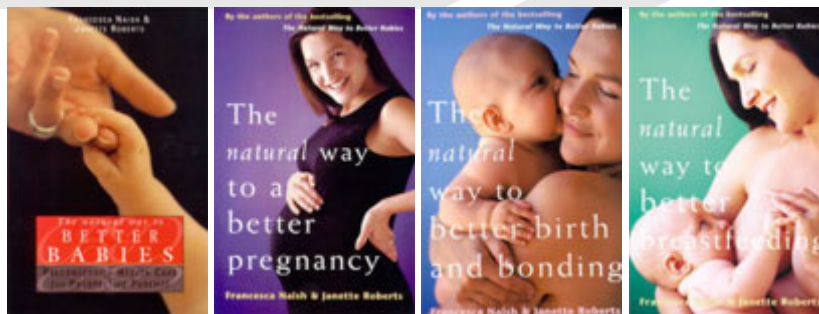
health. Research on a second formulation of Maca phenotypes for men, Maca-OG™ (Revolution™) indicates improved sperm production, mobility and quality, enhanced sexual function, normal adrenal function and more. In addition extensive pharmacology and toxicology studies confirm absence of any adverse effects.

Ensuring that both partners are in excellent health before conception can ensure optimal fertility, reduced rate of miscarriage, uncomplicated, full-term pregnancy, short, straightforward labour, good bonding/no post-natal depression, successful breastfeeding relationship, and an exceptionally healthy happy baby! With the necessary health-promotion measures ranging across diet, lifestyle, environmental and mental and emotional issues, the introduction of products that optimize and support these measures is very timely.

The protocol outlined below is a terrific foundation however for more detailed information or to buy *The Natural Way to Better Babies – Preconception Healthcare for Prospective Parents* go to <http://www.naturalhi.com/Products/BabiesBooks.aspx>

By Jan Roberts

Jan has spent almost 40 years in the health care industry, 20 of those working in the area of women's reproductive health. She is a pharmacist with a postgraduate diploma in Clinical Nutrition and the Australian representative for Foresight the British Association famous for its work in promoting preconception health care. As co-author of the international best selling series *The Natural Way to Better Babies ... Better Pregnancy ... Better Birth & Bonding ... and Better Breastfeeding*, Jan has presented 'preconception' and 'wellness' workshops and seminars to the general public and health professionals around Australia and NZ since 1987. She has made frequent appearances on radio and TV and is a regular contributor to various magazines and journals.



BEFORE YOU CONCEIVE

- The preconception work-up applies in equal measure to both partners and should be completed, with all health-promoting measures in place, at least four months prior to conception. Give yourself as much time as you need to prepare, but make sure that both of you have the healthiest possible diet, lifestyle and environment during that critical 4 month period.
- Support your foundation or core health – an adaptogenic product such as Maca-GO™ for both you and your partner will support fertility and ensure that all of the following health promotion measures achieve optimal results! Best available products, with published clinical trials to support their use - **Femenessence™ MacaLife™** (for her) and **Revolution™ Macalibrium™** (for him).
- Optimise your nutrition - an adequate supply of *all* the vitamins, minerals, essential amino and fatty acids are necessary for proper fertility and for the whole reproductive cycle to proceed smoothly. Improve your diet and take a balanced combination of nutritional supplements.
- Make sure your diet contains an abundance of organically grown, fresh fruit and vegetables – **Quintessence™** is an alfalfa based product that can support and enhance these dietary changes.
- Detoxify – 8 glasses of purified water every day is a good way to start on a detoxification program as well as **Quintessence™** which detoxifies and creates a slightly alkaline pH which is critical for conception.
- Avoid common social poisons such as cigarettes, alcohol, caffeine and other drugs (including oral contraceptives).
- Avoid environmental toxicity – this means reducing your use of chemical-laden products and limiting your exposure to electromagnetic radiation.
- Establish a regular exercise routine – both aerobic conditioning and strength training are important.
- Reduce stress and maintain a positive attitude.
- Treat existing conditions such as infection, allergy, hormonal imbalances (e.g. PMS) **Femenessence MacaLife™** can be helpful here too.